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by George F. Hummel

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TO YOU, LITTLE SECRETARY, VALIANT
HELP AT CRITICAL MOMENTS DURING
THIS BATTLE WITH A WOMAN

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PART I

I

THERE was a scene of early childhood beyond which Evelyn's memory seldom penetrated. Details of this scene and words that were spoken stood out with sharp distinctness from the shadows of her submerged self. Not because it contained elements startling, or unusual. Perhaps for the contrary reason, because it epitomized, in a way, that whole composite of factors in her early environment which most definitely shaped and colored her. The sunset glow of that late afternoon of her grandmother's sixtieth birthday spread its tints, with the years, over much of her own life only remotely related to it. The room itself endured, a symbol.

A white-curtained window looked out from it upon a tiny grass-plot and a street shaded with great elms. In the corner-pane of the lower sash an imperfection in the glass broke the entering rays of light into an oval of brightly colored iridescence. Often, in later life, this iridescence shone down upon her undiminished through intervening space and darkness. In a colored print above a sofa of horsehair William Penn made an endless compact of peace with very gorgeous Indians. From a blue vase on a corner stand covered with heavy, red-and-white lace nodded dried grasses of faded purple, red, and yellow. A piano, very black, with two projecting candle-holders of shining brass, stood across the corner of the room between its two windows.

Gentleness; subdued colors on a tonal background over

which played faintly the slow, solemn harmonies of Grandma Sheldon's favorite, Haydn. Yellow cakes, very sweet, with hidden seeds of fennel. A little blue cup, her very own, on a white-covered table beside her grandmother's larger cup which was pink-flowered and banded with gold. Aunt Carrie with a napkined tray. Hot, sweetened milk-and-water flavored with coffee.

Across the top of a page of music, in black script: "From the German. Aus der Jugendzeit. Translated by—" somebody. Above them the last, long chords of the old-time love-melody fading into stillness, fading slowly as color fades from a sunset cloud.

No swallow brings, no swallow brings,
Those days of youth again.
Yet swallows sing, yet swallows sing
As sweetly now as then.

For a time this stillness, seeming deeper because of contrast, remained unbroken. The rays of a setting sun lay full upon her grandmother's sharply molded face. From beneath the closed lids of her eyes welled tears.

"But—grandma!" Evelyn's feet, hanging half way between her seat at the piano and the floor, wriggled nervously. A puzzled frown of thought gathered about her wide-set gray eyes. She asked, hesitatingly: "Is it awful, awful old to be sixty years old?" There was no reply. The frown deepened. "Is that why you are crying, grandma?"

The old lady shook her head, brushed away the tears and stretched out her arms.

"Come!"

The child slipped down from the stool and snuggled into her grandmother's lap.

"You mustn't cry," she said and her voice was liquid as when she crooned over her favorite doll. "I love you very much!"

"I cry because you play exquisitely, Eve. You have in you the soul of music. You make me very happy."

The child nodded thoughtfully. This was not very clear to her.

"But I don't cry when I am happy." She laughed. "When I cry I make lots of noise. Howard says I make too much noise. I don't like Howard as much as I do Edith, do you?"

"I love you all, dearie. But perhaps I love you just a tiny bit the best."

Evelyn tightened her arms about her grandmother.

"I wish I could always live with you. I would play for you only the music you loved best—even the hardest, hardest songs. But not if you wanted to sleep. When I have to take my nap Howard plays the cornet. Always Aunt Pru has to scold him. When I grow up I shall have only girls for children—like you had my mother and Aunt Carrie, didn't you? She was your very own daughter, my mother, wasn't she? That's because you are my grandmother. She was the beautifullest woman in the world, my mother."

"Yes. She was very beautiful, Eve."

"I can't really remember how my mother looked. Sometimes I can. When I grow up I shall have a daughter. I shall call her Jane, too. I think Jane is the darlingest name in the world. Your name is Jane, too, isn't it? I hate my name. It's too long! But I like Eve. You always call me Eve, don't you? Aunt Pru always says: 'Ev-e-lyn!' I wish I could change my name to Jane. Can't I change my name if I want to?"

The old lady's eyes were closed. She was smiling. She shook her head. The child twisted the lace fringe of her grandmother's house-wrap over her fingers. Her face lighted with eagerness. "Tell me about the little house you lived in with grandpa and my mother when she was a baby and how all the people came and listened to you when you sang for them."

"But I have told you so many times!"

"Anyway, I love to have you tell it to me."

So for the hundredth time Grandma Sheldon pictured a tiny cottage, a balcony perched high upon a mountain-slope at the edge of a forest where the air was pure, at night, cool

and sweet with perfume. Told how from this balcony she could watch great sailing-ships loading in the port below. How, to pass the lonesome hours when her husband was at his work, she would sit at the piano which he had brought to her over the sea from home and play and sing the songs they both loved so well. And of all the songs she sang the one which her husband loved best was "Aus der Jugendzeit." Then how she would lift the screen from before her balcony window and see the natives standing beneath palms, or squatted upon the ground listening to the strange music of the white woman. And how for a long time they would remain still as though the music had cast a spell upon them and at length steal off quietly into the forest.

"And did they love you because you played for them?"

"Yes. They would bring me flowers, for they knew that I loved flowers, and fruits and beautiful baskets."

"Would they love me, too, if I would play for them?"

"Of course they would, dearie."

There was a moment's silence. The child sat staring, wide-eyed, into space.

"Maybe, some day, I shall go to that island."

"Who can tell?"

"And then would grandpa come home to you?"

"Yes. I would have your mother all dressed in white. And we three would sit together on our little balcony and watch the great sun sink in golden fire into the blue Caribbean. It was heavenly beautiful!"

Again there was silence. The old lady's eyes had closed. She was reliving moments of happiness in her past. At length the child gave a slow, deep sigh.

"Why didn't grandpa and you live for ever and ever on such a beautiful island?"

When at length her grandmother replied it was as if she were unaware that it was a child who hung upon her words. And yet the sense of the words she spoke was to linger on in the memory of this child through all the years that lay ahead of her.

"When you have lived to be as old as I am to-day, little Eve,

you, too, will know that only memories of happiness remain, of sights and sounds that are beautiful. All the rest fades finally away into the shadow of the past. Only what is lovely lives on and on, forever."

Grandma Sheldon's sixtieth birthday fell in the early fall of the year eighteen seventy-two when Evelyn herself had just turned six. In that distant age, shadowy in chaos, Stamford was still a small New England village straggling rather prettily for some distance along both sides of the old Post Road between New York and Boston. To the right of this highway as one entered the village from the west a small, somewhat dilapidated two-story building of brick preached age and decline through dust-coated windows and weather-beaten sliding-door. Above this door, from a background wavering between white and black, emerged a name still fairly well-known in the musical instrument trades. "Grainger Pianos." Beneath this, upon closer examination, one could decipher in small caps: "Jepson Grainger and Sons, Makers."

In eighteen seventy-two old Jepson Grainger, who had sawed out and set up the original Grainger piano in the toolshed back of his father's farmhouse on the north country road, had long since foregathered with his Puritan ancestors. Of two sons who had inherited a thriving trade and the two-story brick factory, one had sold out his interest to his brother back in the mists of the thirties, and moved to Ohio to enter the farm-implement business and found a family in no way connected with Evelyn Grainger save by inference and genealogy. The other, Howard by name, had carried on alone (and none too successfully) to his death by typhoid in the year before the outbreak of the Civil War. The already dwindling piano business together with the rambling old Grainger home on Main street Howard Grainger had left to the care of an only son, Charles. The family furniture and most of his personal belongings he had bequeathed to his daughter, Prudence, who, having suddenly been left a widow under circumstances referred to in the local Weekly Bulletin as "unfortunate" had returned a few months before her father's death to sleep

in her old, girlhood bedroom over the kitchen. The concluding clause of the old man's will was a solemn admonition to his son Charles to care throughout her life for the comfort and the well-being of "my well beloved and sorely tried daughter, Prudence."

Charles Grainger never learned the content of that long conversation between Prudence and her father on the evening of her return to the home of her ancestors. It was on the evening following that episode in her life which the local paper had qualified with typical New England reserve as "unfortunate." Very late that night the old man had opened the door of his room and called to his son. Prudence had gone to bed. Charles detected traces of emotion in the bearded face of his rigidly self-repressed father.

"Charles," he said, and his voice was a tone lower than usual, "your sister will live with us from now on. I would like you never to refer to this night, nor to what has passed in her life. Let it be—forgotten."

And so it remained.

It was forgotten as only incidents of a certain type can be "forgotten" in the past of those New England families which have set their indelible stamp upon so much of American life and manners.

As a very young lad Charles had spent hours gazing at a print of the boy Mozart seated at a spinet in the private apartments of the palace at Muenchen. As a youth he had written very bad verses in the style of Addison, had composed very simple melodies for Sunday-school exercises at Christmas and Easter. Then he had married the older of widow Sheldon's two daughters, Jane, who, according to common village-gossip, besides being penniless, which was bad enough, was "delicate" which was worse. At length marriage and the dusty twilight of the factory's inner balcony had rendered Charles immune from dreaming and adjusted him to the slow, gentle rhythm of life as he found it.

Widow Sheldon hailed originally from Philadelphia. She had married some kind of a trader in an English colony on one of the smaller islands of the Caribbean. Yellow fever

had killed her husband and youngest child and left her stranded two thousand miles from nowhere. One day she had turned up with her two children, Jane and Carrie, at the Bishop Arms, the village's single inn. Distant relatives of her husband, farmers in the hills back of Stamford, gave her advice according to which she bought a tiny cottage belonging to one of them with the greater part of the funds remaining to her. Then they ceased to pay any attention to her or her baby daughters. The fact was that this frail, malaria-bleached and very lady-like wife of their cousin was a bit highty-tighty for daily use. Too much book-learning and too little housewifery.

So widow Sheldon had fitted in as best she could with the life of this New England village and succeeded, after a fashion, in making ends meet by giving private lessons in music and in French and Spanish to the children of such parents of the vicinity as could afford accomplishments so wholly decorative and dispensable.

During the years that followed, the business of making and selling Grainger pianos went on, but haltingly. Other makes, less rich in tone but in fancier cases, put on the market with blatant disregard for plain fact and propriety, gradually pushed the Grainger piano into the shadow of the old-fashioned. Charles Grainger saw his customers slowly dwindle away to a few staunch and staid old dealers of his own New England states, and that same period which witnessed the beginning and the amazingly rapid expansion of half a dozen upstart competitors saw the sclerosis of old age fasten itself ineradicably on the once prosperous firm of Jepson Grainger and Sons.

The sudden death of Jane Sheldon when her youngest child was but two years old left Aunt Pru with a complicated problem on her hands. The undemonstrative head of the Grainger household grew, year by year, more silent and reserved. Never a man of many friends he withdrew more and more into the circle of his immediate family until practically his only diversion was a weekly game of chess with old man Allen Ferris, fifteen years his senior, and owner of Stamford's biggest in-

dustry, the Ferris leather-factory. On Saturday evenings it was Evelyn's privilege to set out the old chess-board and arrange upon it the thirty-two ivory pieces in order for play. Among her earliest recollections was this weekly task that never lost for her its fascination and the sight of her father and his gray-bearded friend bending over their game as she called out to them a last good-night from the stairway.

Quite unconsciously Evelyn became accustomed to pleasures of a quiet order. Never was she aware of the repressions which the pleasant calm and the quiet routine of her home established within her essentially sunny self. She went daily to the little cottage up the hill where lived Aunt Carrie and Grandma Sheldon. When Evelyn had been still a tiny thing barely able to toddle about uncertainly over the flowered rug of her grandmother's sitting-room the old lady had discovered by chance her inherited ear for harmony. At four years of age Evelyn had been able to play the simpler melodies of Haydn and Mozart. In later life she could never think back to the time when music notes and the piano keyboard had been unfamiliar to her.

On this afternoon of her grandma's sixtieth birthday Evelyn skipped gayly about all the way down-hill to her home, intoxicated with delight, bursting with eagerness to tell her sister Edith of the incredible plan for her own future which for the last hour had been discussed by her father, Aunt Carrie and Grandma Jane. While she was closing the front gate behind her, still at a considerable distance from the house, she heard fourteen-year-old Edith over on the hammock end of the porch giggling in that silly way she used when boys were around. Then she heard Frank Marshall's laugh and the big, rough voice of John Ferris. Frank Marshall was clerk in the bank opposite the post-office and John Ferris, the son of her father's friend and neighbor, was a student off in a big school somewhere and only home during vacations.

Evelyn's face drew into a scowl of indecision. She had news, however, too important for family niceties. She broke in upon her sister's little court with an excited account of

Grandma Sheldon's birthday party. Edith interrupted her with a dry, "Wonderful, child, ve-ry wonderful. But run along now. It's time kiddies like you were in bed."

Then John Ferris seized her under the arms and tossed her roughly into the air. She resisted violently and screamed an angry: "I don't want you to do that!"

"Gee whiz! What a spit-fire! You used to be a nice little girl."

"Aren't you ashamed of yourself, Evelyn?"

She wasn't. She hated him. His big hands had pinched her, terribly. She burst into tears and ran into the house to Aunt Pru who was back in the kitchen mixing Boston brown-bread for their Sunday breakfast. She incoherently declared to Aunt Pru that from that day on she was going to live with Grandma Sheldon and that it was all arranged and that she hated John Ferris and that she wouldn't have to go to school at all, but only play school every day with Aunt Carrie. Then those funny little criss-cross lines appeared all over Aunt Pru's face and she stood erect while her hands, all daubed with brown-bread, rested on the edge of the bowl.

"Does your father know anything about this very extr'odn'ry plan?"

But of course he did! And along came her father himself to explain matters.

Thereupon followed a long, confusing argument about school, and Aunt Carrie and fol-de-rol and a lot of things she couldn't understand at all except that Aunt Pru approved of none of them in any way, shape, or manner. As Aunt Pru was leaving the kitchen, having given the last pats to the lump of brown-bread and set it aside to rise in its covered bowl, she turned to her brother who sat by the table balancing a big wooden spoon on his finger.

"If that is to be the sum and substance of this child's training, then certainly I won't be held responsible for results. I want that much distinctly understood!" Aunt Pru said "distinctly" in that high-pitched tone which she used when exceedingly displeased about something. And when her brother only smiled and continued to jiggle the wooden spoon about,

she added: "You've got one no-account in your family already. Now you're bent on making another. It's all along the same line—because you're a failure yourself!"

Then she disappeared. It was that way with Aunt Pru. Suddenly words would go swishing about like leaves in a gale. Then, as suddenly, Aunt Pru would disappear. An hour later she would be there, calm and composed, as if nothing out of the precisely ordered routine of her life had ever ruffled its quiet exterior.

That night, after Evelyn had unfolded the chess-board and set up the men for her father's weekly game with old Mr. Ferris, and after Aunt Pru had kissed her good-night with unwonted gentleness and had taken the lamp away with her, Evelyn lay awake in her bed and listened to the slow, faint sounds that came up the stair through her open door from the room below. She thought over the incidents of that day and of all the talk about her.

Then the scene in Grandma Sheldon's little sitting-room returned to her and wrote itself indelibly upon her memory. And the scene that followed in the kitchen. Probably Aunt Pru had meant Howard when she spoke about a no-account in the family. Howard was always getting punished in school and went around with boys whom Aunt Pru called "low." What did she mean when she said that her father was a failure? Her father? Probably she hadn't heard that right. She wished she was grown up. Then she would understand things. She wished she was as old as Edith. Then she would have beaux, too. Not big, stupid fellows like John Ferris and Frank Marshall. She would have her very own husband who would live with her on a beautiful island and she would have a little baby to play with, a tiny, weency little baby like her mother was when—like she was, herself, in the picture with her mother on the bureau.

Stealthily she crept out of bed and over to the broad window-sill where her favorite doll, Jane, lay on a blue and white pillow, asleep under the stars. Stealthily she crept back into bed and cuddled the doll to her warm little cheek. Then, far more vividly, the vision came to her of her mother, as they

sat together on a balcony high over the sea. The music of insects outside in the orchard became the song of beautiful tropical birds. Through the heavy, perfumed air came the last bars of the old love-melody which her grandmother was playing for natives lying under beautiful palm-trees, asleep.

2

At the age of twelve Evelyn Grainger was a high-pitched, dynamic little creature, reacting swiftly to stimuli imperceptible to a nature less delicately poised, enjoying and suffering intensely in moments the content of which was unsuspected by those about her. The years that had passed in association with individuals so much older than herself had made of her a grave little body living much in her imagination, given to puzzling out her personal problems in her own private way. Through her sober mannerisms shone an underlying, native joyousness. Her laugh was never loud, but it had a delicious ring of whole-heartedness to it. The odd little frown that had wrinkled her forehead and puckered her lips as a child when she groped for the significance of a spoken word, or a passing thought, continued to give her eager face at such moments an expression wholly individual. Already the brows above her still too wide-set gray eyes were developing a shade so much darker than that of her chestnut-colored hair as to form an immediately striking feature.

Her years of "School" with Aunt Carrie had, as Aunt Pru feared, increased her reserve and equipped her with information both irregular and narrowly circumscribed. Under Aunt Pru's unrelaxing supervision she had her own set tasks in the daily routine of the Grainger household. Her tiny bedroom was kept immaculate; her dresses, her linen, her toilet-articles in precise array in their appointed place.

Far more important than any other single factor in Evelyn's environment had been her daily association with Grandma Sheldon and the sound instruction she had received in music. In addition to the compositions of her grandmother's favorites, Haydn, Mozart, she knew much of the work of Mendelssohn,

of Clementi, and Spindler. Her complete unconsciousness of her skill lent charm to her playing. For her work had been almost exclusively alone with her grandmother, or her father. The only exception to this was when she was asked to play on Saturday evenings for her father and old Mr. Ferris after she had set out the board for their game of chess.

Then, within a year, the second marriage of her father, the death of Grandma Jane, the marriage of Edith to Frank Marshall came, one upon another, to mark the first jostlings of the world of fact.

For years Mrs. Crandall had walked home with them from church, had sat beside Evelyn at table while Mr. Grainger had carved the chicken and had passed the plates over to Aunt Pru for vegetables and gravy. Ever since Evelyn could remember her father had called Mrs. Crandall "Mary." She was the widow of a former salesman of Grainger pianos, had been employed for the past several years in the factory as a sort of combination demonstrator, billing-clerk and secretary to Mr. Grainger. On the day following her marriage with her former employer she appeared but little later than usual in the dusty little office on the mezzanine floor.

Now, the supreme duty and the sole business of a man's wife, in the minds of one hundred per cent of Mr. Grainger's neighbors and fellow-churchmen, was, failing children, to keep his house clean, his clothes neat and his stomach full. The idea of a man's solemnly dedicated wife turning her back on all this and setting out daily with her husband to his place of business was an idea so preposterous to the puritan conscience of Aunt Pru, so irreconcilable to the divinely ordered facts of a fixed and immutable universe, that from the morning following the marriage of her brother to "This widow-person" Aunt Pru was a changed woman. But since her authority remained undisputed, Aunt Pru continued, as before, in a struggle become only more desperate and against odds only more impossible, to function in her own inimitable way. Often when the new Mrs. Grainger was down in the factory with her husband Evelyn would tiptoe into this bedroom into which Aunt Pru now never set foot and timidly

gaze at the clothes of her stepmother scattered carelessly about, at the disorderly array of toilet-articles and knick-knacks on that very bureau-top which had been, as it were, her own mother's shrine and from which her mother's photograph still gazed down at her with those great, sad eyes that seemed now so ineffably beautiful.

On the night after her grandmother had been taken out for the last time from that little living-room which had formed the center, too, of Evelyn's life as far back as memory could carry her, Evelyn was permitted to sleep with her Aunt Carrie. Until the late hours of that lonesome night she and her aunt, in the new, deep intimacy of their common sorrow, talked together of Evelyn's own future as a woman. For the first time another person talked to her of that greatest of all mysteries which had fascinated her in moments alone in the sunshine of their garden, or in the dark of her bedroom. For the first time she listened, awed, to her aunt's hazy, very delicate explanation of what puberty would soon, now, mean to her physically, as a girl; of what the love of a man would mean to her, spiritually, as a woman; of what children must mean to her on all counts as a mother. In the wonder of this richly colored and very indistinct vista which Aunt Carrie's low, vibrant voice opened before her Evelyn forgot the pain of her grandmother's death and nestled her warm cheek against the lean, unloosed bosom of her aunt, unconscious of the tragedy in the presence of which she lay, or of the doubly bitter suffering of this woman whose slow, trembling words at last lulled her to sleep.

Evelyn ran home on the following morning to pack up her things and come back to live forever with Aunt Carrie. Aunt Pru was cleaning up the breakfast dishes. She listened to Evelyn's solemn announcement. Then she put her foot down on it with characteristic lack of formality. Aunt Pru was shocked at the flood that followed.

"You—little—vixen!" she said, slowly, as if what she saw and heard was something wholly incredible. "You stamp your feet at—me?"

Then Evelyn fled down to the factory. She climbed those

unfamiliar stairs to the dingy little room marked "Private." In the presence of her stupidly grinning stepmother she poured out to her father her passionate declaration of rebellion. She saw a profound sadness in his eyes and felt, somehow, the emotion behind the gentle pressure of his arms.

Gradually from his quiet words there came to her for the first time the realization that she was not a free agent; for the first time a dim sense of that enveloping mesh of duties to others which life, unknown to her and regardless of her willing, was weaving about her as unbreakable as it was intangible.

So she settled back into the routine of existence. Little by little, this first great gap in her life was closed by swiftly cropping incidents and covered with forgetfulness.

The marriage of her sister Edith to Frank Marshall, the bank-clerk, pushed into the background the death of her grandmother and formed for weeks before and after the center of her dreaming. When, on that fateful morning, she stood, a little behind her sister Edith, beneath the bower of green and white which Aunt Pru and Howard had helped to build in the corner of their transformed parlor, and listened to the slow, solemn words of their old preacher as he slipped over Edith's finger that shining ring of gold, Evelyn missed half of what was said because of the pounding and thumping of her heart within her and the sloshing of blood in her ears. It was hard to realize that this exquisitely beautiful lady beside her was her own sister Edith and that from this minute henceforth and forever Edith would no longer be what she had always been, but something very different and very mysterious as her Aunt Carrie had explained to her. The minister was saying "one and inseparable, for this man to have and to hold, forever—"

And now she would be—Mrs. Frank Marshall!

Evelyn had read it on the cards which she had helped to put into envelopes.

This was how something happened that changed the whole world for anybody who got married. Not when they were old, like her father; only when they were young. When they

got married first. The second time didn't count. Only when they were married as her own mother had been. Aunt Carrie had tried to make it clear to her. It had never been clear until now! Now she could *feel* what it all meant. As she turned to leave that fatal spot, so impossibly a part of her everyday home, with the perfume of flowers in her nose and throat, with the joyous music which she knew so well immersing her in waves of ecstasy, she felt life opening before her in never-ending vistas of delight. She heard her own fate, exalted and unimaginably lovely, calling through the years ahead of her.

A longing immense and undefinable welled up within her. A longing for ends she knew not, for things sensed, but not comprehended, vibrations from the uncharted sea of her own experience pulsing faintly on this hither shore of her life.

The loneliness of that night following her sister's wedding did not disappear with the coming of another day. Her feeling of strangeness, of isolation, lingered on to make her more and more conscious of a change that had crept into her life. Her school-tasks began to seem difficult, not fascinating; her aunt more and more a teacher, less and less a comrade. She began, now, to speak of the days "when I was a child."

Their lawn which, once, with its great, dark masses of evergreens, its bowers of flowering shrubs, had been for Evelyn a world of beauty peopled by fairy princes who walked and talked and played with her, changed subtly now into a rather unkempt yard which had long since seen its best days. The picket fence, once a towering white barrier through which she had gazed wonderingly at an unknown Great Beyond stood, now, minus a picket here and there, badly in need of a coat of paint. Their furniture showed its age. Aunt Pru's bits of knitted lace over its worn upholstery seemed only to increase the dilapidation which they were intended to conceal.

Only the great rosewood piano still retained its pristine loveliness. But those rolling chords which swelled out from more practiced fingers seemed no longer satisfying because beautiful in themselves; suggestive rather, of unknown emotions vaguely foretasted. At times she felt welling within

her as she played an impulse to weep, to cry out an intense, unformulated desire for life, for beauty, for all that the future held for her of mystery. At such times, unable to think or to express herself, she felt within herself the boundless capacity for suffering and happiness of humanity as a whole. At such moments she thrilled with the joy and the grief of all men everywhere.

These changes did not come suddenly. Little by little she became aware of a new perspective; little by little her inner unrest developed into active discontent. With the coming of the lazy days of summer she idled about the house and porch so obviously out of sorts that at length Aunt Pru, in desperation, "took the matter up" once and for all with her brother.

There was something radically wrong with the girl. Every day in every way she was getting lazier, more sulky, less manageable. If she was asked to do a little dusting she tripped around like Queen Victoria, gave everything a lick and a promise and called it square. That very morning she had told the little mess to shake out her rugs and give her room a thorough going-over—which the dimon knew it needed! On her return from Mrs. Howell's she had found Miss Evelyn, if you please, curled up in the hammock with not a lick of work done, reading that filthy "African Farm" book which Mrs. Grainger had brought into the house and which wasn't fit for any decent grown woman to have in her hands much less a snip of a girl little more than a child in arms! That's how much his wife bothered her head about her stepdaughter! No. She, alone, had to shoulder the whole weight of the house and everybody in it. She refused to do it! If this kind of thing was allowed to go on she'd wash her hands of it. He might as well know that flat. She'd wash her hands of it.

Consequently, on the following evening Evelyn sat wet-eyed in family conclave while Aunt Pru and Mary Grainger, for the first time since the conjunction of these two major planets in Evelyn's childhood sky, found themselves in complete accord in opposition to Mr. Grainger himself who insisted weakly on defending Aunt Carrie's school-methods and

general eccentricities. When, at length, Mr. Grainger was indignantly requested by his wife to explain what that old-fashioned old maid of a Carrie Sheldon could possibly know about the modern needs of a young girl and what kind of an odd stick he wanted this child of his to grow up into with a smatter of French and music and a dabble of this and that as her whole stock-in-trade he turned his gentle eyes toward the sniffling Evelyn, sighed wearily, and capitulated.

In the following September, having just passed her fifteenth birthday, Evelyn, together with a little trunk packed with the clothes and other articles stipulated in Mrs. Reynolds' personally written tabulation of school-requirements, set out in the family buggy with her father for Greenwich and Rosemary Hall.

A first, sharp contact with confused and confusing circumstances wholly strange, a frightened self-adjustment, then she felt herself sucked up and whirled along the swiftly moving current of school-life. For her, at least, moving swiftly, full of eddies that swung her violently about, muddied, choked with submerged drift which struck against and bruised her, resistless, merciless, sweeping her willy-nilly toward a remote, incomprehensible goal. She was dismayed, fascinated, homesick, miserable, on edge with a vibrant curiosity.

From out of a mist faces shone for a moment, faces of girls for whose friendship she passionately longed. Facts emerged. She was bombarded with a deluge of facts. Facts that disappointed, facts that thrilled her, facts about herself, about individuals in this confusing swarm of strangers; intimate facts, unsuspected and amazing facts. That mist of adolescence so pregnant with dangerous possibilities, so soon forgotten in universal experience, rolled back and forth over a rapidly-widening landscape from which seemingly unrelated details started out to her with benumbing rapidity.

She learned games; acquired the desire to excel; delighted in mischief of a very harmless order; listened with hidden eagerness to comments on her skill at the piano; saw and felt with secret pleasure the curves of her own rapidly developing body. And always and above all else she reveled in her com-

radeship with her first girl chum, Clara Schelling, who talked to her endlessly, who sat beside her as she practiced her music, whose arm was about her waist as they studied together, whose hands were forever fondling her, who imitated her manner of dressing, who whispered to her that she was beautiful, who stole into her room after lights were out.

With an eagerness which stirred within her a vague self-reproach she began to play the compositions of men at that moment in the heyday of their fame, of Rubinstein, Moskowsky, Liszt, of Leschetisky, who, as she read in the Musical Courier, was thrilling audiences in the capitals of Europe with this very self-created music on which she now worked with fascinated intensity. She read reports of symphony concerts in New York City. She listened to her teacher's talks on the revolutionary genius of Richard Wagner. Compositions of which she had never thought save as isolated gleams of genius existing in and of themselves, beyond the world of everyday, became contributing streams in a vast, tidal flow of harmony. Music became for her, with an increasing appreciation of its vitality, an endlessly evolving, infinitely potential part of life itself.

In February at a school-concert in the nature of an exhibition of the school's music-classes, she played the Twelfth Rhapsody of Liszt. When Miss Reynolds, in school-assembly the following morning, announced to the hushed student-body the names of five girls chosen to accompany her, during the Easter holidays, to hear Wagner's Lohengrin, and when, as fifth on the list, she read out the name of Miss Evelyn Grainger, that moment and the ones immediately succeeding seemed to the dazed little Miss Evelyn Grainger to mark quite the perihelion of her life career, a height of glory never to be transcended.

That night she discussed the exciting prospect with Clara Schelling and the wonderful coincidence of Clara's home in New York almost around the corner, you might say, from the opera house. Also the fact that Clara's brother would be home for the holidays. And Clara, with an expression of ecstasy, declared that Evelyn could only wear a Nile green

dress on that night to set off her lovely gray eyes, and comb her hair—"like this, you know; all—I'll show you just how to fix it! I know ex*actly* how to make you the stunningest —Oh, my dear, you just wait!"

On a night early in April, Evelyn sat in one of the grand tier boxes of the Metropolitan Opera House, one hand clasped about the cold, shriveled fingers of Miss Reynolds; the other furtively pinching herself through the silk of a dress (which, to be sure, was not at all the right shade of green) to see if she was really real, and watched and heard the overwhelming tragedy of Lohengrin unfold itself.

When, three days later, on the evening before Easter, Evelyn set out the chess-board and arranged on it the pieces for her father's weekly game with Mr. Ferris, she did it saying to herself: "I will do everything just exactly as I used to do it." She did it with a gayety that was infectious. The general holiday-feeling mounted to something like hilarity when Mr. Ferris, upon his entrance, announced that his record of their last six years' games showed this, their three hundred and fifty-seventh, to be the rubber game of the new series.

Mr. Ferris' sole expressed reproach against his departed wife was that she once, in a fit of house-cleaning, had burned the old book which had carried the record back into the mists of the distant past.

So Evelyn sat beside Mr. Ferris and her father under the soft glow from the shaded drop-light over the playing-table and watched this deciding game as quiet as any mouse—which, by the way, was not at all as she used to do. Aunt Pru, glancing across the room from time to time was startled by the sudden realization that this child was almost beautiful—if you looked at her sideways in a certain light. And through that silence which made her father and his old neighbor pleasantly oblivious of her presence there sounded in her inner ear the insinuating motifs of Lohengrin, laughter, the din of crowded streets, the peculiar, high-pitched voice of Clara's seventeen-year-old brother Kurt who was preparing to enter

West Point that coming fall, the whispered endearments of her chum.

While her father was putting the chessmen into their old leather box and folding up the board, Mr. Ferris, who had won their three hundred and fifty-seventh game and was in a corresponding frame of mind, swayed back and forth, rubbing his palms on his trouser-legs and asked Evelyn whether she was going to start growing pretty soon, or was always going to be a little peanut like her mother, and to show him what she had learned to play on the piano since she had been away in this highfalutin boarding-school. So Evelyn, not fully awake from her revery and a little miffed because her father had lost the game, went to the piano and played for their old neighbor Grieg's Papillons in a way that Clara Schelling would have called divine.

As Evelyn swung around at the conclusion of the piece with a little grin and gurgle of embarrassment Aunt Pru, breaking the dead silence, wanted to be kindly informed what in the world was this hodge-podge that she had just listened to? Was it music, or was it—well—she was no musical critic, thank the Lord! And Mr. Ferris with a disgusted grunt observed that all this new-fangled stuff they called music had grown so out of all rhyme and reason that a plain body who really enjoyed music that was really music had to—had to— "It's a sin!" inserted Aunt Pru.

Right here it was that Evelyn's family discovered her to be a thoroughly roused and thoroughly ruined modernist of the deepest dye. When she wound up her incoherent defense of living composers with a defiant challenge to them all to declare Richard Wagner, if they dared, anything else but the very greatest genius in the whole history of the world, her father, seeing the tears in her eyes and hearing this new, vibrant note in her voice, felt a kind of shiver go down his spine and was shocked by a sudden vision of his first wife as she had stood, one morning, by the open window of their bedroom and had passionately declared her right to bring up her own children as she wished to and not as his father and his sister Pru dictated.

With her first school-year behind her Evelyn returned to Stamford and the quiet routine of her home. Edith Marshall came, now, very rarely for a few minutes' call. Her baby had come three months before to make the break with her old home complete and fix Edith's life and interest on her own little family. So Evelyn walked and talked a great deal more with her father than she had ever done before and began to understand his gentle spirit, his quiet acceptance of things as he found them. She even began to understand Aunt Pru, and smiled with calm indulgence when Aunt Pru saw fit to give her a little plain talking-to. And, of course, a great many things that Aunt Pru said were right—in a way.

Her pleasantest hours were spent in her sister Edith's home, or in the tiny yard outside it tending Edith's baby, Herbert, while Edith ran into the village on errands, or to the Stamford Loan and Trust Company to consult her husband, Frank Marshall, who was now, according to Edith, the youngest bank-cashier in the entire state of Connecticut. In these hours Evelyn was free for dreaming.

When, as she often did, Evelyn helped her sister wash the baby and saw emerging from its wrappings that oddly formed and plainly unfinished little body fastened so insecurely to its quite understandable head, saw its threshing arms and curving feet, its funny, bulging stomach and that curious little thing stuck there so perkily between its twisting legs she felt thrills of pleasure as strange as they were exquisite. She felt very grown-up as she helped her sister with the baby. She became extravagantly fond of this soft, helpless bit of humanity who smiled up at her so adorably from his embroidered pillow, who instantly began sucking at her finger the moment she put it in his mouth, who, with that queer equipment so vastly more disturbing than any picture she had formed from hearsay, or the paragraph in her physiology, was destined to become a boy, a man like all these others, so measurelessly different from—from herself, for example.

Gayly that fall she plunged again into that same current of school-life which at first had seemed so resistless and so confusing to her. When Evelyn now walked up the aisle

in morning-assembly every one knew it was the signal for a school-sing. Frequently, in the free periods, a noisy tangle of girls would gather around the Grainger piano in the music-room and some one would break loose and go shouting through the halls—

"Hello you Eve!—Where's Eve Grainger?"

Then she herself discovered a voice. It was Clara who insisted on her using it, declaring it to be the sweetest, loveliest voice! In fact, it wasn't bad, what there was of it. When Evelyn sang to her own accompaniment "Thine eyes so blue and tender" everybody kept mouse-quiet and at the end gurgled and squeaked with delight. It was just too lovely for words!

Spring ushered in for Evelyn long afternoons of walks and talks arm-in-arm with girl friends who babbled of summer, and organdie dresses, and of So-and-so, not to mention any names, who was simply crazy about a red-headed freshman in Yale who signed his letters "Dippy." And Clara would declare that since Evelyn had begun to wear her hair loose-coiled in a psyche knot she looked simply adorable. Whereupon Evelyn would sigh that she would give anything in the wide world to have Clara's Titian curls!

Sometimes the girls talked about careers. Clara Schelling was going to be a kindergarten teacher. And every one agreed that this was one of the most useful things a woman could do. Evelyn was going right on with her music. Then Clara looked ecstatic and spoke of the time when she would send up bouquets of roses to the greatest woman-pianist of the age who would still be her dearest friend on earth—wouldn't she? Eve would never let anything in the world come between them, would she? Eve certainly would not! How could any one think of such a thing?

Once more she was in her home with her father, her step-mother, Aunt Pru. How different everything—yet always the same. As if all the world might change, yet her old home and everything in it go puttering around forever in its little, closed circle. One great difference. The Ferrises were all at home this summer. And Miss Ferris who, until she had

gotten a divorce from a husband, had been Mrs. Langley, suddenly took a great liking to Evelyn. And, really, Miss Ferris' appreciation of music was surprising, considering her father and the fact that her brother couldn't carry a tune to save his life. What right had Aunt Pru to look so disagreeable about it? What right had Aunt Pru anyway, to tell Evelyn what to do and what not to do? She wasn't a child any more. John Ferris had just returned from a year in Germany spent learning German methods of leather-manufacture. He was taking his father's place at the factory.

And now Evelyn realized that Miss Ferris, whom she had always pictured to herself as terribly tall and stately and beautiful, was only the least bit taller than herself! It was the way she carried herself. And her perfectly stunning clothes. Beside her huge brother Miss Ferris looked almost tiny. He was the biggest thing. He towered up over his father like a giant. Evelyn hated big men. Kurt Schelling was tall. But so well-built. Evelyn had now on her bureau a photograph of Kurt in his plebe uniform. Kurt had hands almost like a girl. John Ferris' hands were like an elephant's —if an elephant had hands. One night when he was turning music for Evelyn at the piano she saw the long black hairs on his fingers. It made a shiver run down her back. They were inexpressibly ugly.

Everybody knew that the Ferrises were the richest people of the town. Frank had figured it all out for Evelyn and Edith one night when they were walking back in the moonlight from a ride in John's new steam-launch which was the talk of the town. That was one of the times when something had happened to its engine. They had to have a clam-digger tow them back to the dock. Frank knew what he was talking about because he was John Ferris' closest friend and practically ran the bank where old Mr. Ferris kept goodness knows how many thousands of dollars.

Evelyn wondered if her own dear old father had money, maybe, hidden away in some bank somewhere that nobody knew anything about. Edith once asked Frank if he thought so. Frank didn't. Aunt Pru ought to be mighty thankful

for the way her father had taken care of her her whole life long so that she never had to ask for a single thing she couldn't have. But goodness knew Aunt Pru didn't want much.

Evelyn thought of some of the things she would like to have. Just a few of them. Then she laughed at herself, Was she in fact getting empty-headed? Aunt Carrie had said so when Evelyn had declared it impossible to come and play for the Presbyterian ladies' sewing-society who were meeting that afternoon at Aunt Carrie's. But Miss Ferris had asked Evelyn the day before to go driving. And, anyway, what did she know or care about the Presbyterian ladies' sewing-society? They were all funny old frumps who knew as much about music as they did about the moon. Even Aunt Carrie knew perfectly well that a girl of Evelyn's age should have pleasures in her life as long as they were harmless.

The pleasure she could stand!

Miss Ferris knew what that meant. Miss Ferris really understood her far better than any one in her own family. They seemed to have so much more in common. In some ways Miss Ferris seemed younger than Edith. Perhaps it was because she was so beautiful. Lovely women never grow old. Who had told her something like that?

Evelyn drifted into memories of some of her delightful episodes with Miss Ferris. In particular the evening she watched Miss Ferris dress for a dance at the new Greenwich Yacht Club. That was a revelation! She had run over right after dinner to ask Miss Ferris to show her once more how to start the tatting around that table-cloth she had been trying all summer to make for Edith. But that was only an excuse. What she really wanted was to see Miss Ferris in her glory. And Miss Ferris who was still dressing upstairs had sent Martha, her maid, to tell Evelyn to come right on up.

Then Miss Ferris had let Evelyn gaze her fill. She had seen Miss Ferris' ball-dress lying like a roseate mist on the silk cover on her bed. She had seen—what hadn't she seen? Silk stockings; not one pair, or three—but dozens and dozens of the most gorgeous rose and gold and pink and blue silk stockings that any one had ever dreamed of lying in regular

rows in a great, rosewood bureau-drawer. From this drawer came a perfume! She had watched Miss Ferris seated before a mirror in three parts that swung out like the leaves of a book and had felt little shivers of delight go through her! She had watched Miss Ferris raise her long, white, beautiful arms and powder her armpits and breasts with the biggest, fluffiest powder-puff imaginable. She had watched Miss Ferris pout her lips and touch to them a scarlet stick in a golden holder and had felt almost wicked. When Miss Ferris had turned her rouged and powdered face, and her dazzling teeth had gleamed out from between those startling lips Evelyn had gasped out:

"You are the most lovely creature in all the world!"

Then had come the real shock. It was a long time before Evelyn recovered from that. She never did wholly recover. It was the thing that lay at the bottom of a lot of her reflecting about wicked things, and things that were not wicked, and Aunt Pru, and her own soul.

After Miss Ferris, sitting there cross-legged before the three-fold mirror in her cerise silk petticoat and stockings, had explained to Evelyn the tatting problem, and while the maid was fussing behind them with the roseate mist which was a dress, Miss Ferris had reached over for a little gold box that lay on her dressing-table. Right before Evelyn's startled eyes she had lighted a cigarette at one of the candles at the side of her table, had drawn in the smoke and let it go out through her nose.

Oh me, oh my, if Aunt Pru had ever seen that!—or the girls at school! Clara Schelling had once boasted that she had smoked. But Evelyn had never seen her. That was one thing Evelyn could never breathe to a living soul at home. If Aunt Pru knew that would she ever let Evelyn set foot in Miss Ferris' yard? It was all but too much for Evelyn herself with all her recently-acquired, broad outlook on life. It had a thrillingly wicked something about it. Miss Ferris must have noticed Evelyn's expression.

She laughed and said:

"Don't you dare tell on me! It would jar these old maids to death.—Want to try one?"

Evelyn didn't! Her throat felt kind of choked. So she only shook her head and tried to smile as if she were in the habit of refusing cigarettes three times a day. Miss Ferris had gone on talking and laughing as if she were doing the most ordinary thing in the world.

This was only one of the shocks Miss Ferris had given Evelyn. There were others. Sometimes she talked. Naturally when a woman is twenty-nine years old and rich and has been married and divorced and almost everything you can think of, why, she can say and do things that a girl wouldn't dare dream of. If Miss Ferris was taking a bath, for instance, she didn't seem to mind one bit who was looking. But she was so beautiful and so graceful that whatever she did was perfectly fascinating.

Edith's baby, Herbert, was by no means as interesting as he had been the previous summer. Evelyn could see the mistakes her sister was forever making. If Evelyn ever had a child would she fuss around like Edith and worry about him every minute? Could one imagine her, Evelyn Grainger, married and—never! She would live like Edna Ferris. Edna could flirt with anybody she wanted to. There were at least a dozen men forever sending her flowers, and candy, and inviting her here and there. Slave number one, slave number two, number three, Edna called them.

That's the kind of life Evelyn would lead when she had become a great pianist and had a dozen lovers crowding around to get a look at her.

Which reminded Evelyn that she really ought to sit down and practice for three solid hours. Evelyn sighed. Life was getting hectic. Next Saturday Clara Schelling was coming for a week's visit. And on the following Saturday she would be seventeen years old. And Clara's brother Kurt was coming from New York especially to be with her on her birthday and they were all to have a ride in John Ferris' launch and a picnic on Shippan Point. And after that school would open.

Time enough to think about work then. She could only be young once.

What other girl of her age was receiving letters almost every week or two from a West Point cadet? Perhaps he might not be exactly what you call handsome. His nose was too long. And his mouth—it was hard to define exactly. The front of his face stuck out too much. But he had beautiful hands. It wasn't so much looks that counted in a man. Some day he would be an officer in the United States army. Captain. Colonel. Perhaps a general. When she was a great pianist. Wouldn't that be—? She was receiving a huge floral-tribute from which dangled a card on a blue and gold ribbon. "General Kurt M. Schelling. United States Army."

3

On Friday, just after Clara had received a telegram from Kurt saying that he would be there on the noon train next day and Evelyn was teasing Clara about the way John Ferris had happened to come along twice that week and then had sat there for an hour or more talking to them, Edith came. She was so sorry about the picnic because Frank would be held at a bank-meeting on the following afternoon. And Herbert was still having a miserable time with those two back teeth. Couldn't they all stay home, and just have a nice picnic-lunch out under the trees in the yard? It would be so much—

Of all the nerve! Did Edith realize that it was Evelyn's seventeenth birthday, and that— No! Edith couldn't realize anything except that little pest of a Herbert. No, thank you! She would not spend her birthday out in their old back yard! They were all going to have a boat-ride and a picnic and a swim at Shippan Point.

Then old Mr. Ferris, when he came over for his game of chess that evening said that his daughter had gone to bed with one of her sick headaches. Evelyn knew what that meant. Now, where was her picnic?

Half that night she lay in a desperate confusion.

Seventeen!

Dawn brought no sudden, happy solution. But breakfast-time brought birthday presents from everybody; among them a white, satin-lined box which disclosed an unimaginably beautiful bracelet with a jeweled clasp, and a note: "To our little neighbor with all good wishes, from the Ferrises." With a gasp of delight Evelyn clasped the bracelet on her wrist. Then she threw her arms about Clara and thanked her violently for guessing her secret longing for exactly such a darling pair of silk stockings.

Kurt arrived on schedule; and never had Aunt Pru cooked so grand a dinner in all her life for any day except Thanksgiving or Christmas. Never had Evelyn been at once so nervous and so recklessly happy.

Just as they were discussing the picnic dilemma out in the hammock, John Ferris came strolling through the gate between their yards with a huge basket under his arm to find out whether this picnic was on, or off, and were they going back on him as all the rest had done? They weren't! And Mr. Ferris had a bathing-suit for Kurt in which, to be sure, two Kurts could be accommodated, but—who cared?

Late that afternoon they lay facing a driftwood fire out on Shippan Point with their backs against a huge boulder on the beach and Kurt and John Ferris smoked while the two girls, with much laughter and contradiction, told stories of naughty escapades in Rosemary Hall. Then Kurt and Mr. Ferris began discussing armies and the difference between Germany, which Kurt insisted was an absolute monarchy, and America, which every one knew was the freest nation on earth—that is everybody except John Ferris. And something about how Germany was trying to steal Yap, which was an island off somewhere. Only we wouldn't stand for that. Well, who would? Evelyn hated Germany. She loved Spanish people. But more than Spaniards she adored French people. Especially the women. They were so chic! Clara told them all how Evelyn was the French shark of the whole school. She knew more than the teacher. It was true! Lots

of times the teacher called on her when she got stuck. And while they talked, a red summer sun sank lazily into a purple and orange sea and the first gleam of the harbor-light flashed to them from its slim, white tower.

Evelyn lay between Clara and Kurt and watched the embers of their fire flush and fade and glow again in the faintly stirring evening-breeze. She heard the drowsy wash and slip of the incoming tide over the long, pebbled slope of the beach. Her one hand lay clasped in Clara's. With the other, at long intervals, she threw pebbles at an empty sardine-can which lay, black and ugly, at the edge of the glowing embers. When her pebble stirred up a tiny shower of sparks she tried to count them before they disappeared in the purple shadows above them.

Seventeen! Who would have dreamed that she would be sitting here with Clara, with Kurt Schelling, with John Ferris, talking—what were they talking about—? Shoes. Mr. Ferris was telling of his plan of opening retail-stores all over and doing away with the middleman. Who was he? And who cared? Next year he was going to open two shoe-stores in New York and one in Brooklyn. Whoever started them talking about shoes? Who wanted to talk about shoes on a night like this? Men were like that. Just like her father and old Mr. Ferris. Kurt was terribly disappointing. He had his back turned to her. She had expected—Clara was half asleep.

Evelyn saw a little cardboard box sticking out of Kurt's sweater pocket. Stealthily she extracted it. Cigarettes. Sweet Caporal. She took one out. She drew her hand from Clara's sleepy clasp as if to brush away a mosquito. Very gently she felt deeper into the pocket. Matches. She had watched Edna Ferris do it. Kurt was telling Mr. Ferris how his father, who was a lawyer, had organized something or other for somebody or other.

Clara sat up with a horrified exclamation. Kurt turned around and stared at her.

"You—little—devil," he said, as if considering the matter.

"Oh, I can smoke!" declared Evelyn with a defiant grimace

which went off into a spluttering cough because some of the smoke got into her nose and throat. She would have died rather than stop.

"I never dreamed—" gasped Clara. At which Evelyn laughed violently.

Then John Ferris reached across Kurt's lap and snatched the cigarette out of her hand.

"Don't be a little damn fool!" he growled.

"You rude old thing!" she exclaimed, violently angry. She sat there biting her lower lip to keep the tears back, her face very white and set. Then she rose hastily. "You can think as you like. But you have no right to hurt me, or to tell me what I can do, or can't do." Then she pretended to be very busy arranging things in their lunch-basket. A good thing it was getting dark. Clara still sat like a dummy. Kurt was chuckling.

"It's all right!" he kept saying. "What's all the fuss about?"

She felt outraged. She had had a perfectly harmless impulse. Why in the world had they come out with this sour old thing who didn't have a spark of humor in his whole great hulk of a body?

Finally she accepted his apology. Then she demanded of him what he saw so awful in the fact that a girl should draw smoke into her mouth and let it go out again.

John Ferris tried to explain. Evelyn said she hoped Mr. Ferris would marry an angel some day so that he could be happy and contented and go on selling shoes without anything to worry about. And Kurt nearly exploded. Mr. Ferris admitted that his sister smoked. Doubtless hundreds of other perfectly respectable women. He always associated a girl's smoking with his memory of a certain night in a Paris café, which Clara then insisted on his describing.

That was, in fact, pretty awful. Evelyn forgot all about the original discussion in her effort to imagine this kind of a scene—and a girl like that. She asked what had become of her. John didn't know. He said it was time for them to start home.

It certainly was! They were still miles from nowhere. Suddenly Evelyn saw Aunt Pru sitting by the table in the living-room listening for footsteps on the front porch. Gee, they would catch it!

"Look—look!" she exclaimed, and stretched both her arms to the huge, red disk of the moon rising over the black tree-shadows of the low cliff behind them. "All my life," she cried ecstatically, "it has been this way! I've always been a little crazy when it's full moon. I'm certain there's some connection between me and the moon. You needn't laugh! My grandmother once told me that it was exactly so with her. And she was the wisest woman that ever lived."

As they glided home under the light of the harvest moon Evelyn sat between Clara and Kurt and felt the warm pressure of Kurt's hand over hers. With Kurt "faking" as he called it an alto octave high, they sang together one after another the old college songs she had learned. John Ferris, who sat ahead steering and only dimly visible in the gloom, hummed away like a loose-strung bass viol all out of time and key, but quite unconscious of it. And always before them, beginning fifty feet from the prow of the launch, ran a glinting, dancing path of gold leading on out into the mystery of the night ahead.

Evelyn stood on the station platform at Stamford on the Sunday afternoon following her seventeenth birthday, and waved good-by to two violently gesticulating arms protruding from a window of a departing train. She turned back, alone, up the familiar street and opened the old gate with its defective latch. She wished she did not have to rejoin her family. She wished she could be alone for hours to get used to this sharp sense of transplantation, of isolation which marks the beginning of new, more vigorous life. She felt pain that was at once pleasure and a stimulant, as a young sapling, newly set in black, well-watered loam, might sense the fresh upstarting of a richer sap through the sting of its torn rootlets.

Physically she rejoined her family, seated, as was the custom on summer Sundays, at the shaded end of the porch. In spirit she was endlessly far away from them. John Ferris had joined them while Evelyn had been at the station with Clara and Kurt. They were so busy discussing Edith's great news that they hardly noticed Evelyn's return.

The position of assistant-cashier in the North American Trust Company of New York City had been offered the day before to Frank Marshall. He would enter upon his new duties on the first of the year—on the second, to be exact.

"It was really," began Frank, largo, with a deep breath, "it was—it was—"

"Not one speck more than you deserve!" finished Edith in a triumphant ff.

Evelyn caught Aunt Pru looking at her. She had been paying no attention to the conversation. She had been wondering if she, Evelyn Grainger, was in love. She flushed. She recognized that not too subtle expression of disapproval lurking about Aunt Pru's prominent brows. Evelyn smiled back conciliatingly. Was Aunt Pru also still thinking about last night? Aunt Pru had certainly heard them out on the porch after Clara had gone in. They hadn't been there three minutes—or, had they? Evelyn had never realized before what a racket their old stairs made when any one tried to go up them so as not to wake everybody up. She felt the spot burning where he had kissed her. She had tried not to let him. She hadn't tried very hard. She had been too afraid of making a noise. Why had she struggled against it? All the way home she had wondered if he would find some way. And then—

"What in the world are you grinning at?"

She glanced up, startled. Mrs. Grainger was nudging John Ferris' knee.

"I'm not grinning!"

Her face was flaming. Frank Marshall gave one of his guffaws and Edith said "ahem"! She was holding her husband's pudgy hand in her lap and was patting it with that air of proprietorship which, for a reason Evelyn could never

explain to herself, had something indescribably repulsive about it. John Ferris laughed in his rough way.

"Don't let them rattle you, Eve."

Evelyn asked to be excused.

"Where are you going?" asked Aunt Pru.

"I need a handkerchief!"

She hurried into the house. She heard laughter; heard her father speak sharply to Edith.

Late that night she had forgotten the little whirl on the porch. She had decided that she was, in fact, in love. She had also decided that love was all right only in a kind of way. She, herself, would go right on with her career. She remembered Aunt Carrie's remark when earlier that week she had spoken to her aunt of her vague plans for a career as a pianist. Two more years in Rosemary Hall, then, perhaps, a year or two in the Boston Conservatory, and then, perhaps, abroad for—

"All very lovely, Eve dear, but who in the wide world is to pay for it all?"

Pay? Why, who in the world but papa? Aunt Carrie sighed. She couldn't quite see how it was all going to end. How what was going to end?

She thought sadly, now, of her father's patient, never-ending struggle, the colorless monotony of his life. How they all clung to him, depended on him! Soon she would help! Why were things arranged so unequally? Her father had a hundred times more brains than old Mr. Ferris, for example. He had a bigger heart, greater courage. He made pianos—not leather. But her father stood alone. That was the trouble. He had no son to help him as John Ferris helped his father. Bitterly she thought of her brother Howard. A no-account mechanic, a laborer. He was soon going to marry a horrible woman. Aunt Pru said it would be a disgrace. A widow with two children. Poor as dirt!

Exactly one year later things shaped to a climax. It was the moon, again, that helped; that moon which Evelyn believed to have some very intimate, personal relation to her special case and which does, in fact, seem to regulate the ebb

and flow of humanity through the sentient channels of its womankind.—The moon and coincidence.

She had been a guest for two weeks of the Schellings at West Point where Kurt's class was having the special privileges of yearlings. From the afternoon of Evelyn's arrival, when a score of cadets fought over her dance programme for the series of hops scheduled three times a week in the big mess-hall, to this last night of her visit after the dress-parade and drill on the great campus of the Academy she had lived through a mental and emotional whirl such as she had only pictured in hours of most vivid day-dreaming.

Intoxicated with pleasure, she had continued to drink with a thirst unquenchable. At the end of her first week she had debated with intense seriousness the comparative charms of three of Kurt's classmates who had emerged from the ruck and were crowding her closest. Two days later it had become a toss-up between Sergeant Colwell of the Artillery, who was as thin as Kurt and as tall as John Ferris, and the son of a Colorado congressman who could do more things on a horse than any one had ever dreamed of. It had also come perilously close to open war between Evelyn and Clara who had had the audacity to call her guest an unconscionable flirt—whatever that was. Clara was always quoting big words from novels. Clara thought her brother Kurt altogether too inexcusably good-natured.

At which Evelyn had laughed with scornful violence. Jealous cat!

It was during one of the intermissions of the dance on Saturday night when Evelyn suddenly remembered that it was exactly one year ago that she had sat between John and Kurt Schelling out on Shippan Point and had dreamily watched this same glorious orb rise in ineffable beauty over the rim of a perfect world. That, too, was on a Saturday. This year—this year! The son of Colorado's congressman had been gently squeezing her hand in the shadow of a pillar. He had been describing how a herd of cattle settles down to sleep at night on the open plains. Evelyn could almost hear coyotes howling. She felt unaccountably melancholy. Half-

an-hour ago she and Kurt had had their first serious disagreement. He was beginning to presume entirely too much. It was Clara's fault. Evelyn was convinced that Clara had told Kurt something. Kurt was also frightfully jealous. She reflected that he was, now, no doubt, also frightfully unhappy.

This Colorado fellow was getting awfully tiresome. She didn't want to listen all evening to stories about cattle. From the tail of her eye she saw Kurt and two other cadets acting silly with a pasty-faced girl in a hideous purple dress. Let him! She excused herself from the son of Colorado's congressman. She walked down the gravel path, dimly lighted from the opened window of the great mess-hall. She walked very slowly. She didn't go far. She turned to look back at the picturesque scene behind her. It was, in fact, Kurt who was coming down the path to her. He had a cloak on his arm.

She turned her sad face toward the moon. She asked Kurt, very gently, to tell her if he remembered what had happened exactly one year ago that night. Kurt did. And in what minute detail! Would Kurt ever forget it? Or her? Or how beautiful she had been—and still was—and always would be—and—and would she walk with him for five minutes? It was so damned hot and noisy back there, and—please! Let *him* fold her cloak about her dear, lovely self.

That's the way it happened. Only much, very much more of it.

They agreed that it would be most sensible to keep their engagement a secret until the following June, when Evelyn would be ready to graduate from school. Then Evelyn could have a party, or something, and announce to the world that in another year or so she would become the wife of Lieut. Kurt M. Schelling, U.S.A. Or maybe even less. It depended on what army-post they would ship him off to. And on several other things. There was but one important thing. That had been settled; had been settled in that mysterious way in which God and the moon and fate and all that had happened in the lives of each up to that climactic moment

arrange such matters. This was the important thing. The rest would all adjust itself simply and naturally about the focal, wonderful fact of their love.

For example, her career as a pianist.

So Evelyn, during her week at home before she left for her senior year at Rosemary Hall, managed somehow to avoid betraying this tremendous secret which lay, now, warm and germinating at the center of all her thinking. And relived it again and again with the more passionate delight during her hours alone.

She joined Clara at Rosemary Hall. And time passed for her, as she wrote to Kurt, on the wings of the wind. The Christmas holidays were upon her before she realized it, and she visiting her sister at her new home in New York.

Mr. Marshall's apartment was on Eighteenth Street. But he had bought a plot of ground away up out of the world on Broadway near Seventy-second Street and was planning to build in the spring. Mr. Marshall had an uncanny sense of values. He told Edith, who told everybody else, that the unearned increment of the land he had bought would cover the cost of building on it within the next ten years. Practically everybody agreed with her, not understanding what Edith was driving at.

"The unearned increment" was a phrase very frequently on Mr. Marshall's lips these days. It had something to do with his Trust Company. Edith was not quite clear about it herself.

Anyway, Edith had a girl, now, who came in during the day to cook and clean up, and a maid who slept in the house and took care of Herbert and the new baby Gloria. Consequently Edith had a great deal of time on her hands for church work and cultivating the acquaintance of the wives of Frank's new friends in New York banking-circles and among well-established merchants who were neither German nor Jew and therefore respectable. During this year in New York Edith had learned to put on quite an air which Evelyn at first found rather disagreeable, but to which she soon enough became accustomed.

The atmosphere of germinating affluence and ripening respectability which hovered over Edith's new home was, in fact, not at all unpleasant to her younger sister. There was developing rapidly within Evelyn a family-pride and consciousness of class which she herself felt only as a firming grip on, and an intelligent realization of, the plain facts of life. There was no course in Hindu philosophy scheduled at Rosemary Hall. In history she had covered only American and one term in English—that is, up to Cromwell. Geography she never did understand. It was only years later that she learned from a Yale professor the meaning of the word caste. But she accepted, now, without a mental punctuation-mark the whole doctrine of the division of humanity into readily definable groups. With complete acquiescence she saw obvious and unerasible lines marking off one kind of a person and one part of the map from another kind of person and another part of the map.

Her curiosity as yet did not concern itself with such matters.

Both John Ferris and his sister were in town. Miss Ferris had taken a darling little three-room suite at the Waldorf for the winter-season. John Ferris, in order to be close to his newly undertaken shoe-store venture, had a bachelor apartment on Washington Square, five minutes' walk from his friend's home. Edith sort of looked after him; saw that his laundry was properly taken care of and joked a good deal about his incorrigible bachelor-habits. Miss Ferris was too busy. Just at this time a manufacturer of woolens with political aspirations was favored in the family betting. Miss Ferris had a Swiss maid who spoke three languages which all sounded alike, and who was always at her wits' end.

Both the Ferrises spent Christmas Eve with the Marshalls. That is, John spent the whole evening there and Edna came very late, after most of the work had been done. Edna brought along her escort, the woolen-manufacturer. Together they trimmed the huge tree which Frank and John had set up in the dining-room, and ranged around its base on the artificial moss and snow the grand display of presents

for Herbert and Gloria. They had no need of a step-ladder. Once John seized Evelyn by the waist in his huge, powerful hands and held her up bodily while she fastened a glittering angel to the topmost twig of the Christmas tree. Such a giant! They had to try to keep a little quiet on account of the children. That only made it all the more fun. Edith did nothing the whole evening but shish and shush and put her hand over Evelyn's mouth.

When Miss Ferris laughingly whispered to Evelyn, "How do you like my latest experiment?" Evelyn murmured, "Fascinating!" In fact, she wondered how a man like this could be a woolen-manufacturer. He was much younger than Miss Ferris, with the stunningest mustache. It was one more proof of Edna's taste in such matters.

If only Clara could have been there everything would have been perfect. Evelyn had teased her to come. In fact, the two girls had had an unpleasant argument about it in which Clara had been rather unreasonable. Clara had assumed that Evelyn was going to spend Christmas Eve with the Schellings, whereas that was obviously out of the question. Clara had argued as if Evelyn would be more at home with the Schellings than at her own sister's house! Which was absurd, Kurt not being there. Christmas belonged to children. Certainly it wouldn't be very nice for Evelyn to absent herself when they were trimming the tree for her own darling little nephew and niece!

For one elected satellite to so rapidly moving a stellar mass as was Miss Ferris, time, as we are supposed to know, becomes relative to one's enormously accelerated speed. Consequently Evelyn bumped head-on into New Year's Eve before she had time for a full breath. She had found time, however, for a very breathless letter to Kurt about the Christmas complications and how it all turned out beautifully and how her father and Mrs. Grainger and Clara and Kurt's father and mother and Miss Ferris' woolen-manufacturer and the whole lot of them were to be Miss Ferris' guests at the Waldorf on New Year's Eve, except old Mr. Ferris, who was in bed with a quinsy sore throat, and Aunt Pru, of course, who

couldn't be dragged out of Stamford, and how Kurt's father and mother were simply wild about Miss Ferris—and who wouldn't be?

So on New Year's Eve they all sat around an enormous table in the very center of the red-room at the Waldorf and amid the laughter and din Evelyn leaned back for a moment to let an unforgettable picture impress itself upon her. Had any one ever seen a vision of greater loveliness than was Miss Ferris, seated, as hostess, between Mr. Schelling and the woolen-manufacturer? Evelyn tried to imagine Kurt buried up there—but she couldn't. There was too much confusion around her. Her father had run over to John Ferris and was clinking glasses in high abandon.

"Here's to the Ferris Shoe-Store Chain that will link Augusta-main with Sa'fr'cisco!"

She had never seen her father like this. Dear old papa! He was so jolly! He looked so funny in his scrimpy dress-suit. She had only seen it on him twice before. She had never before realized how fat her stepmother had grown. Sitting beside her, very straight, poor papa looked like one of those brooms tied for good luck to the gable of a new barn bursting with hay. His little whiskers stuck out at such comically defiant angles. She lifted her glass and cried out to him. He beckoned her to come over and kiss him. He embraced her, and some of the champagne spilled down her neck and upon that glistening shirt-front over which Aunt Pru had no doubt leaned with all her might for half-an-hour or more. While Evelyn was wiping off her neck and her father's chin with her father's big white napkin she saw Mrs. Schelling, beside whom she had been sitting across the table, nudge Mr. Schelling with her elbow and heard her say, perfectly audibly:

"Isn't she the prettiest little thing you ever saw in your life?"

Mr. Schelling grunted, also audibly. But Evelyn couldn't tell if he agreed with his wife. She pretended as if she hadn't heard a word.

Mrs. Grainger struck the one slightly off-key note. She

began to talk loudly, and her laugh was so, so sort of out-of-place. How many years was it since she had had a glass of champagne? Mr. Grainger thought it was six. Mrs. Grainger insisted that it was seven. And proved it to everybody's satisfaction. Her rubicund face radiated light and heat as if from an inner conflagration.

Somebody kept trying to fill Evelyn's glass the minute she had taken two or three sips from it. If Mrs. Schelling hadn't kept her hand over it half the time, goodness knows how much champagne Evelyn would have drunk. Clara kept sighing: "If only, only Kurt was here!" Each time Evelyn agreed with her and said, "Oh dear!" or something appropriate, until finally something in Clara's tone rasped Evelyn's nerves.

"Well, my goodness!" she exclaimed. "It isn't my fault, is it?"

Then Clara kept still about it. It was a fact. She couldn't help it, could she? Probably she missed Kurt a whole lot more than Clara. She didn't keep hollering about Howard not being there. And Howard was her brother just as much as Kurt was Clara's. Clara was getting awfully funny, anyway. Always dissatisfied with something or other. She was nothing like the fun she used to be. Evelyn wished to heaven that she had never—

Then everybody jumped up amid a terrific uproar and began shouting "Happy New Year!" and everybody began kissing everybody else and knocking balloons into the air and throwing confetti and wishing each other happiness and good-luck and everything. So Evelyn ran over to embrace Clara with all the good-will that New Year's Eve calls for, and Clara had the nerve to offer one cheek to the dearest friend she had on earth! So Clara got a peck instead of a kiss and John Ferris must have noticed this, for he stood beside Clara and it was his turn next. First he kissed Clara; then he kissed Evelyn three or four times or more, as if to make up, until Mrs. Schelling pulled him away, exclaiming:

"Wait a minute! There are three hundred and sixty-four more days in 1884!"

Which made Evelyn more rattled than ever.

When it was all over and Evelyn and Miss Ferris had said good-by to everybody out in the lobby—for Miss Ferris had engaged a room for Evelyn at the hotel so that Mr. and Mrs. Grainger could spend what was left of the night in Edith's spare room—they turned arm-in-arm to the elevator that would lift them into the costly quiet of Miss Ferris' seventh-floor apartment. There were four of them. For although the two girls had said good-night to everybody, both the woolen-manufacturer and John Ferris had insisted, it being a stormy night and a high sea running, on seeing them safe in port. And both men had promised solemnly to be off and away inside of twenty minutes.

They stayed longer than twenty minutes, with a lot of nonsense about not wanting to go home on one foot, and not in the dark on account of hold-up men in the Square, until Evelyn, dizzy with laughter and weariness and excitement, pleaded to be allowed to go to bed, since she was to be at Edith's next morning at eleven and it was already next morning. Edna ordered the men, rather sharply, to leave. But John kept on pleading with his sister to offer them a little breakfast before turning them out into the cold.

Because the hotel was crowded Edna had not been able to get the adjoining room for Evelyn. Evelyn's door was the fifth down the corridor to the right. As Edna was giving Evelyn directions the woolen-manufacturer indignantly demanded whether Edna intended to shoo this young lady out into the night without so much as a gun, or a hatpin for protection.

"Come!" he cried, stretching up his right arm and laying his left diagonally across his rumpled shirt-front. "For the honor of the family! It shall never be said that I have permitted a young, a beautiful, a sleepy little princess to wander about the corridors of a hotel on New Year's Eve, defenseless and alone. You count the doors! I'll strike the matches."

And before Evelyn could have protested had she wanted to he had tucked her arm under his and started out of the room.

"For heaven's sakes—sh!" warned Edna's violent whisper. "Good-night, dearie!" Then the woolen-manufacturer pulled shut Edna's door behind them.

With a shiver of something between terror and delight Evelyn saw the first gray light of the New Year filtering in through a window at the end of the corridor.

"Count!" whispered the woolen-manufacturer.

"One!"

"S-sh! Not so loud. When you say 'five' you die."

"Two!"

Her feet were hardly touching the carpet. In her ears a tonal sibilance as of wind through a pine-forest. She wanted this man's arms about her like this.

"It's morning!"

"It's the light from your beautiful eyes!"

She giggled hysterically. The pressure of his arm made her dizzy. She leaned against him. She felt a sweetness in her throat, a tension through her body infinitely more thrilling than she had ever felt in Kurt's arms.

"Three!"

"S-sh! Two to go."

She felt the hot pressure of his hand on her breast. She shuddered. She closed her eyes and turned up her face to his. Her whole body was trembling violently.

"Please!" she gasped. "You hurt me." His arm suddenly relaxed.

"Forgive me! Four!"

She felt herself lifted off her feet. He was kissing her cheeks, her neck and shoulders. She clung to him passionately, her eyes tight shut, her body tingling with a wild hunger for him. His mouth crushed against hers. Her teeth were pressed open. His mustache scratched against her nose. With both hands she struck violently against his face. Her every muscle writhed in the grip of his arms.

"Oh, please! Please! Please!" she moaned.

"You little devil!" he said in a queer, choked whisper. "Five!—and home!"

Her toes touched the floor. She crumpled down upon it

and hid her face in her hands. She made no other sound than the sharp whistling noise of her panting breath through her tight-clenched palms. He stood over her, breathing heavily. "Get up!"

She felt his arms beneath her shoulders. Her tensed muscles were quivering as if she were being struck with whips.

"Go away!"

"Listen!" he urged in the same hoarse whisper. "You can't—I won't touch you. Please! Go into your room."

He stepped over her to open the door before which she huddled. She was sobbing. She heard him strike a match and light the gas. Again his voice, louder now, inside.

"My God, girl, be sensible! If any one should— On my honor I won't touch you. Do you hear me?"

A door opened. Footsteps. Some one stood over her.

"S-sh," said the woolen-manufacturer.

"For God's sake, what's the matter?"

It was John Ferris.

"Get her in here. She's crazy—or drunk."

John Ferris bent over her and very gently shook her shoulder.

"Eve! Come into your room. Please. Before some one comes— There's absolutely nothing—"

She rose, suddenly, ran into her room and threw herself face down on her bed. She was acting from purely animal instinct. There was a roaring in her ears. Her blood pounded in her temples. Her door closed shut.

"What kind of god-damned—"

"Not a thing!—I tell you not a damn thing. I kissed her. I don't know what the devil—"

She didn't catch half the stream of angry words. She only knew that John Ferris was furious and the other defending himself. Both men kept their voices down. And then, sharply:

"Evelyn! For Christ's sake, be quiet! You'll have the whole hotel in here!"

Suddenly she sat up and glared at both of them with wide,

tear-filled eyes in which both could read only terror and anger and revulsion.

"I hate you! I hate both of you! I want you to leave me alone!"

The manufacturer left, instantly. But John didn't move. He stood staring at her. At length he said, as if with an effort:

"Why do you hate me, Eve?"

And he came slowly over to her.

"Will you go away from me!" She felt like screaming. He stopped.

"Very well." His voice, which was perfectly quiet, had a vibrant, dominating note in it that roused a furious resistance within her. He went on, maddeningly. "You can't hate me, Eve. I won't let you hate me. Because I—I won't let you."

"I do hate you!" she cried in the shrill tone that marks the verge of hysteria. "I want you to know I'm engaged to marry Kurt Schelling!"

Angry as she was, and ashamed, and quivering with the blinding sense of outrage which only a girl of eighteen, ignorant of herself, of life and all the rules of war can feel, she nevertheless could see very plainly the effect of her words on him. For a moment he stood with one hand resting on the back of a chair under the gas-jet and stared at her. A sharp intake of breath and then he turned to the door.

"Very well!" For a fraction of a second he hesitated. Then he shook his head violently. "Good-night."

He was gone. He had closed the door behind him. She had never imagined a face with an expression like that. She shuddered. She buried her face in her pillow and her body shook with sobs.

4

The sheets of the longest letter by far that she had ever received from Kurt lay scattered before her on the little study-table of her room in the senior cottage at Rosemary

Hall. These sheets contained Kurt's reflections, comments and ultimatum in reply to her perfectly honest and unexpurgated account of that dramatic episode through which she had lived in the first wan light of New Year's morning in the rooms and corridors of the Waldorf Hotel. When she had mailed it she had thought it a beautiful letter. And now! How could a man so misunderstand a girl he professed to love, and—and be so heartless about it!—and so unreasonable, and twist everything that one had poured out from the bottom of one's heart into something so—so far from what one had plainly meant? And she had said beautiful things. She couldn't remember the words. She had written in her first profound consciousness of womanhood, of the fact that there was something innate in her that inspired passion, in her eagerness to lay all that she had and was on the altar of their love. And he had missed the whole thing.

It was over! She would show Mr. Schelling that she was not an empty-headed flirt. Who was he to wonder whether or not she knew what love really meant? What did he know about it, himself? And if he started this way before they were even publicly engaged, what would he do if ever they were married and living in the same house together?

Jealousy! It was the one thing she would not stand for. A stupid letter!

Gradually her hurt pride and anger and rebellion crystallized into expression. She had to let them weigh her reply at the post-office next day to see how many stamps were necessary to carry it all up to West Point and her one-time lover. When the little old man at the window, who had been one of Ellsworth's zouaves in the Civil War, licked three at once and stuck them on for her she was able to smile back at him. For she had had an hour or two of sleep and it was snowing. And whenever snow fell in great, downy flakes like this, without wind and bluster, but softly, caressingly, as if angels were kissing her, Evelyn felt an indescribable buoyancy of spirit which nothing whatever in those days could have countervailed.

What did she care if she got zero for that day's class-work in English composition because she had completely forgotten to hand in that day's stupid theme on "How we brought home our Christmas tree"? Clara Schelling had written the silliest stuff in an effort to be funny. Clara was always boot-licking the English teacher. Clara had given up all idea of being a nurse. Now she was going to college, and talked about earning a living by writing stories. Probably she would. She was homely enough.

On top of all this Evelyn received a letter from her father which was indefinably sad. He wrote of the approaching end of her school-course and of her vague plans for the future. He couldn't say anything final, as yet, about the Boston Conservatory. Business had never been quite so bad. He wouldn't be surprised if the whole country went Democratic at the next election. Between Catholics in politics and Jews in business the whole country was changing. The good old days of the past were gone—gone for good.

He assumed, since Edith had written that Eve would spend the Easter holidays with her in New York, that Evelyn knew all about Frank's sudden appointment as treasurer of the new Mid-Continent Loan and Trust Company of Chicago. He hoped that Evelyn would not forget her old home in the midst of the pleasures which it was right and proper for her to have.

Evelyn read the last lines of the letter through a blur of tears. Pleasures! She would forget the whole selfish idea of Boston Conservatory and study in Europe and—and she would go home in June and devote the rest of her life to making happy the last years of her lonesome, old father whom at this moment she so passionately loved. She wouldn't even go to see Edith at Easter. Chicago! That would be the end of Edith, too. Everything was breaking up.

One passionate desire, only, in her heart. It was that she might never again have to meet that woolen-manufacturer face to face! Or John Ferris; or talk to John Ferris; or see him at a distance—or even hear about him. A thousand times she wondered what he thought of her. A thousand

times she assured herself, defiantly, bitterly, that she didn't care.

Nevertheless Easter did find her again a guest at Edith's home in New York. And, on the whole, Evelyn felt that she had acted wisely to have consented to spend these last few days with her sister before they separated, perhaps forever. Of course, most of Edith's talk was about her own family and her plans for the future. Apparently Frank Marshall was becoming quite somebody. To hear Edith talk one might think he was a second Cornelius Vanderbilt. Evelyn would look at that shining face at the head of their little table and at the little ridge of fat over his ears and wonder if it could be possible, as Edith said, that this man was a financial genius. Edith was getting fat, too.

After the Easter services they all walked a few blocks down the avenue together to see what Easter had brought to the world in the way of new hats. That is, Edith and Evelyn and Herbert and Frank walked, in the order named, since Frank was always tipping his beaver and stopping to shake hands with somebody or other, whereas Edith kept thinking she saw, half a block ahead of them, the very model that she had in mind to go with her new tailor-made suit. Evelyn and Herbert sort of meandered along in between.

Just as they were coming into Madison Square Miss Ferris beckoned to them from about the smartest-looking carriage in the whole procession and ordered her coachman to draw up at the curb. A little icy trickle ran down Evelyn's spine. John Ferris was with her, also a stranger with a very black mustache who bowed very stiffly when Miss Ferris mumbled a name that sounded something like Monseer Carolamong. Evelyn remembered that Edith had said something about a rumor of Edna's sudden engagement to a very handsome French count. Evelyn had not asked what had become of the woolen-manufacturer. The man was unquestionably very French and very decorative. He also seemed very young. He apologized with an amazing smile for his faults in English.

As luck would have it, at precisely that psychological mo-

ment the three Schellings came along: mother, father, and daughter.

That was a queer coincidence! Then it was that Evelyn proved to any interested observer the firm grip she had on herself. All the grown-ups bowed and smiled and expressed dissatisfaction regarding the weather—which was, of course, raw and blustery as is proper for Easter. Clara suddenly saw something in a show-window opposite them that interested her tremendously. Evelyn, who simply hadn't seen Clara at all, bowed to Mr. and Mrs. Schelling with an icy hauteur which the little French count at his best could do no better than imitate. When the Schellings had passed on Edith exclaimed:

"What in the world is the matter with you two! Aren't you friends any more?"

Then Evelyn, whose traitorous cheeks had flamed a conspicuous red, reached over to tweak the ears of a hideous French poodle squatted in Edna's lap and said, with that airy kind of a smile:

"If you don't mind, I don't care to speak about it. Where in the wide world did you find this darling little thing?"

It seemed that Monseer Carolamong had had it sent direct from his private kennels outside of Paris.

That afternoon, when it was time for Evelyn to be putting on her hat and coat if she would catch the four-thirty local to Stamford, Edith followed her into the spare bedroom and closed the door. Another parting. Another gap in her already too empty life. Suddenly Evelyn realized how fond she was of this sister, away down in her heart. And now Edith was going away—perhaps forever. Edith was so lovely when she wanted to be.

"It may be a long, long time, Eve, before we see each other again."

Something in Edith's tone made Evelyn's eyelids flutter—a metallic note. It was exactly the same tone that Aunt Pru used when she read aloud from the Old Testament.

"Oh, I hope not!" she replied brightly enough, and tucked her hair under her new toque.

"It worries me that you have nobody to give you a little sensible advice," persisted Edith in a slightly higher pitch. Evelyn knew instantly that something was in the wind.

"I don't know that I am in special need of any," she said sweetly, "that is—"

"I think you are!"

"Oh, please, E.! Let's not spoil these last few moments. You've all been so sweet—"

"That's exactly the trouble! Everybody treats you as if you were a child. I never knew any one of your age quite so—so—what shall I say? I don't want to hurt your feelings. So rattle-headed and—when I write to papa—"

"You needn't write about me to papa!"

"You don't know what I'm going to say."

"I don't want you to say anything!" Her vague fear shaded into protest. "What business is it of yours what I do? What do you know about me?"

"It's just this much of my business that we received a letter yesterday from papa asking Frank to lend him money to send you to the Boston Conservatory. I think it's asking a little too much for papa to put a mortgage on our home to—to—"

"It isn't so!" protested Evelyn in a stifled voice. She had one arm in the sleeve of her coat. For the life of her she couldn't finish the operation. "I never asked papa—"

"It isn't that Frank isn't perfectly willing to help papa, and you, too, in any reasonable—"

"I don't want him to do it!"

"Frank's perfectly lovely about it." Evelyn's eyes were spilling over now. Thoughts went slithering about in her head too swiftly to be caught and put into words. "But it makes me a little tired. If you want to know the truth I'm disgusted at the silly way you acted to-day toward John Ferris."

"John Ferris!"

"If you had any sense you would see that he likes you—or would, if you—"

"I think this is the most ridiculous conversation—"

"You do! It's because you're a little ninny. Edna says the same thing. And you act so snippy and—I'd like to know who the dickens you think you are? You simply ruin any chance you might have—"

"I won't listen to you!"

"All these grand ideas you have are all very fine. But you may as well know the truth. I don't believe you're going to amount to anything so wonderful. You play very beautifully and all that. But if you could marry a man like John Ferris—"

"He's the last man in the world I'd ever dream of marrying!"

"Is that so! Well, you're a little fool!"

But Evelyn had run into the living-room where Frank Marshall was waiting with his hat and coat on.

"I don't want you to go with me!"

"What—what do you mean? Here—" She had picked up her grip.

"Please! Let me go!"

He pulled the grip out of her hand.

"What's the matter with you?— Edith! What the devil—"

And Edith hastily explained to her husband that she had been trying to talk a little sense into Evelyn's vacant head. And Herbert came over rather timidly to the couch and stood before Evelyn, twisting his pudgy little fingers in perplexity and demanded:

"What's she doin' that for?"

All the way to the station Frank tried in his heavy, financial way to explain to Evelyn how fond of her Edith really was and how everybody thought the world of her and how willing he was, if she had her mind set on it, to do anything he could about letting her go on with her music, and for her not to worry about anything because the whole damn thing was a lot of fuss about nothing at all—absolutely nothing whatever.

That night as she lay in the dark of her room in the rear gable there was but one fact that stood out clearly from a

welter of depressing circumstances. Her father was the one person in the world who understood her. She lay perfectly quiet, hearing subconsciously the soughing of wind in the eaves outside. If her tilt with Edith had had no other result, it certainly had served to start her thinking. But her thinking seemed to get her nowhere. She kept going around in an endless circle. Not on the same plane, however. It was a spiral. Each time she completed a revolution she was a little lower down.

She had never before seen her father really angry. After supper they had gone alone into her father's little den off the living-room. There she had told him exactly what Edith had said about lending money and about her playing. At this her father had jumped up and kicked over the chair and demanded in a voice of thunder who in the name of Continental Congress was trying to tell him what he should do and should not do? And Evelyn hurriedly assured him in a frightened tone that it was certainly not she.

Then Aunt Pru had opened the door and wanted to know what the mischief had happened. Mrs. Grainger stood behind Aunt Pru with a look of blank amazement on her face. Her father had pushed the fingers of both hands up through his beard and shouted out that it was none of their business and to stay out and shut the door! Which they had done. Evelyn would have given her little finger to have learned what her father wrote to Edith. She never learned.

On the following day she left for her last term at school. Through all her correspondence during these last months at Rosemary Hall ran a note of melancholy. She never received a single line from Kurt Schelling in reply to her last letter. Long ago she had taken the West Point banner off her wall. You could still see where it had hung for so long.

The whole family witnessed her graduation. Even Howard. As against the honors in Latin and English which Clara Schelling received Evelyn played the Schumann Concerto. After it was all over Evelyn went to the back of the room where Howard was just leaving with his new wife and two children. She shook hands cordially with Howard's wife,

who said Evelyn was the prettiest thing and acted at once grateful and a little defiant—no doubt because the rest of the family had ignored her. Her hat was an amazing thing. Evelyn told Howard how sorry she had been because he had not asked her to come to his wedding. How could he treat his own sister that way? Howard invited her to come any time she felt like it to visit them. They lived, he said, in a little shack up the hill. Nothing swell, but comfortable; had a garden. At that moment his wife slapped the hand of a freckled-faced youngster who was stealthily picking his nose.

Then Evelyn glanced around nervously, said a hasty good-night and rejoined the rest of her family. As she did so she heard her father's smiling assurance to Miss Reynolds that his daughter's future was definitely settled. She would be sent to the Boston Conservatory that fall and given every opportunity to develop her obvious talent.

Had her father mortgaged their home?

Then, and in the following days at home, she asked herself a thousand questions, but never the one which all her circumstances might have seemed to force upon her—namely, did she really want to go to this Boston Conservatory?

With the coming of summer old Mr. Ferris was again hobbling about the porch and grounds of his home next door. Again, two or three times a week, he and Mr. Grainger faced each other over the old chess-board and fought out the new series which had run, now, to seven hundred and thirty-odd games. Mr. Grainger was well in the lead. Old Mr. Ferris was by no means as alert mentally as in his heyday. He had grown cranky in inverse ratio. Sometimes he became so angry at a foolish move he had made that it became embarrassing for everybody. Mrs. Grainger coaxed her husband to give it up for the sake of general peace and quiet. But Mr. Grainger smilingly assured his wife that she didn't understand the matter at all.

In fact, as their quarrels over chess increased in frequency and acerbity their affection for each other seemed to deepen. They sat together sometimes for hours on Mr. Ferris' porch. Aunt Pru and Mrs. Grainger would look over and see them

sitting there staring out over the lawn and wonder what they were talking about so endlessly.

When John came over week-ends they usually all sat together on the Grainger porch. Evelyn would sometimes go inside and play for them. Then John would come in and talk to her. Her embarrassment in his presence gradually disappeared. Never, by so much as a word or look, did he refer to that New Year's night in the Waldorf. That whole episode which had cost Evelyn so much shame and unhappiness was as dead as if it had never been.

The chain-store business was developing. In addition to his New York and Brooklyn stores John had one, now, in Boston and one in Albany. During the following year he was going to develop the Long Island territory.

Edna Ferris was in France for the summer with a friend whom she had taken along as a kind of companion. Evelyn asked if Edna had gone to visit Count Carolamong, or whatever his name was. Apparently she hadn't. Aunt Pru said she'd heard that the count had gone off owing bills to every Tom, Dick and Harry. John remarked that all those frog-eaters were built on that stripe—at which Evelyn bridled splendidly to the defense of the people of France.

Old Mr. Ferris, whose great-grandfather had been a notorious Tory, snorted disgustedly. He said good old Anglo-Saxon blood was good enough for him, and as far as liberty was concerned his ancestors had fought and died for liberty before these dagoes ever heard of the word. Had she ever heard of the Magna Charter?

Yes, she had! And she didn't remember so much about it. Had he ever heard of the Huguenots? Anyway, nobody would deny that we never, never could have won our freedom if it hadn't been for France. Had he ever heard of Lafayette?

Then she caught her father looking at her in that way of his. Perhaps she had been a little snippy. But it was true. Old Mr. Ferris was so used to having his own way about everything that it wouldn't hurt him to be told the truth once in a while.

Then John Ferris asked her to play for them. Which she did with the greatest good-nature. After a little, just to humor old Mr. Ferris, she played his favorite "Onward Christian Soldiers" and then broke into a Bach fugue.

Her interest in sacred music had recently felt the fresh upstarting of a potent sap. Young Dr. Elisha Beebe's first sermon after he had recently been installed in that same pulpit from which old Dr. Terry had preached hell-fire and damnation for forty-seven years before he had gone totally blind, had been on "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another." He took as his main theme "Love," John 13: 34. Everybody knew that he did it to show the completeness of the break which he proposed making with the whole Dr. Terry tradition. That first sermon had almost split the congregation.

Evelyn, forewarned though she had been by Aunt Pru, and fortified by Aunt Carrie, had capitulated instantly without stipulation. Then came Dr. Beebe's "Vesper Talks" on "Music and the Worship of God." And, of course, her own talks with Dr. Beebe, who spoke to her as to one having authority. Dr. Beebe had explained to her that her essentially religious nature was evidenced by her wonderful understanding of music. So she couldn't very well refuse when he urged her to sing in the choir.

Evelyn dropped in to see Aunt Carrie a great deal more frequently than she had for the past two or three summers. Now, for the first time, Evelyn could see the resemblance between herself and her mother's portrait over the bureau in Grandma Sheldon's old room, which had been left exactly as it had been on the day her grandmother had died. Aunt Carrie said that her sister's hair had turned gray like that before she was thirty years old. It was a Sheldon family trait. It rested like a silvery halo about her mother's indefinably sad, yet youthful face. Curiously enough, Aunt Carrie said, Evelyn's mother had had Evelyn's same funny habit of wrinkling her forehead and screwing up her eyes when she was thinking hard about anything. Evelyn was fascinated at this thought of the transmission from one individual

to another of characteristics so trivial in themselves, so significant in their implication.

From whence, in fact, had she come? By what paths? Had their old Huguenot ancestor, perhaps, wrinkled his forehead like that?

As far as she could learn there was no mortgage on the house. But her father had paid a deposit to the Boston Conservatory. There was certainly very little money coming in from the piano business. Only old Wagenrad was still working in the factory regularly, with one helper. Mr. Grainger said that in the fall he probably would take back three more men. The summer months had always been their dullest season. Dull, duller, dullest. Three seasons in the year.

Mrs. Grainger no longer went to the factory. She helped Aunt Pru, now, wash dishes, and did the upstairs work. That is, except on one day in the week. On this day Mrs. Grainger kept discreetly downstairs and beat rugs, or swept the porch and such-like, while Aunt Pru with her own hands made certain that if anything suddenly happened to her they would at least find the house clean. On the whole the two ladies got along beautifully.

Aunt Pru had, in fact, become less fiery in these last two or three years. Aunt Pru had always seemed to Evelyn static, physically and mentally. Set. Immutable. But now Evelyn realized, with a kind of shock, that Aunt Pru was getting older.

With her age there was coming, slowly perhaps, but surely, a suspicion of ripeness; a softness at certain moments which Evelyn had never associated with Aunt Pru's sterner stuff. Her aunt was—what? She was going on toward sixty.

The memory suddenly came to Evelyn of her Grandmother Sheldon's sixtieth birthday. Had Grandma Sheldon been no older than Aunt Pru was now when she had held Evelyn on her lap and told her those wonderful stories of islands in the South Sea and taught her first to love music? Was that possible? Grandma Sheldon had seemed to Evelyn, then, so incalculably old!

She heard Aunt Pru humming to herself out in the kitchen

and the dull knock of Aunt Pru's iron on the padded board. "From Greenland's icy mountains." She always hummed that when she was alone in the kitchen on Tuesdays, ironing.

Two nights before this Evelyn had had a fleeting glimpse into those depths of Aunt Pru's soul which never had been and never would be wholly bared to any living creature. And Evelyn had been startled by a sudden vague perception of all that might lie buried there.

Her father and her stepmother had gone to bed. A waxing moon shone down over the old chestnut-tree which stood still majestic, though dying, in the corner by the driveway gate. She sat with Aunt Pru, in silence broken only by the faint squeak of Aunt Pru's rocker. She had promised John Ferris to go with him to see the tennis-matches at the new yacht-club courts on the following Saturday. It would be the first time she had ever been in his new launch. A Mr. and Mrs. Dixon would be with them. Mr. Dixon was a real-estate agent. He arranged leases for Ferris shoe-stores.

Evelyn couldn't remember what had put the question into her head. It had just popped up.

"Auntie, what did your husband do for a living?"

After a perceptible pause Aunt Pru replied:

"He was a builder. A master-carpenter, we called them in those days."

Now Evelyn had never before mentioned the fact of her aunt's marriage, nor, as far as she could remember, had any one ever mentioned it to her. It had suddenly struck her as an extraordinary fact. The faint, monotonous squeak of her aunt's chair continued at the same measured intervals.

Evelyn remembered once seeing a photograph of Aunt Pru's husband. She couldn't remember where. It wasn't in the family-album. Perhaps in an old bureau-drawer. He had never seemed real to her.

"How old were you when he died?"

"I don't remember—twenty-nine, I think."

John Ferris was twenty-nine. Aunt Pru's reply had come a shade lower, a shade deeper in tone. Evelyn had a peculiar prescience, felt a sudden curiosity.

"How long had you been married?"

"Four years—a little over four years."

Evelyn tried to imagine this.

"Why have you never told me about him, Aunt Pru?" Her aunt did not reply immediately. "I would love to know more about that part of your life."

She heard her aunt's slow exhalation. The squeak had stopped.

"It is something I try never to think of, Eve. There are some things it is better for one never to know."

"Oh, that isn't true! I have wondered hundreds of times if you were happy then, or if—tell me, were you happy?"

For a moment Aunt Pru's voice softened.

"I don't know.—Yes. I was, at first—very happy." She paused. "Perhaps you never were told that my husband killed himself."

"For heaven's sake, auntie!—How?"

"He drowned himself."

"How—dreadful!"

"My husband," said Aunt Pru in a low even tone, "was, unfortunately, a coward."

"You poor, dear thing! I never dreamed—"

"No. It's better not to, dear."

A dozen questions swirled up within Evelyn. Why? Where? When? And again, how? But she could not ask them. There was something inviolable about this iron reserve.

"How awful!" she murmured. She longed to be able to throw her arms about her aunt's stiff, silent form and pour out her woman's sympathy.—But she could not. "How perfectly—terrible!"

Her aunt had risen. She spoke as if with effort.

"I think I will go in, dear. To-morrow is wash-day."

5

On the night before Evelyn was to go with John to the tennis-matches at the Greenwich Yacht Club her father spent the entire evening over at the Ferrises'. Evelyn knew that

John's friends, the Dixons, had come out with him that evening for a week-end and rather expected to be asked to accompany her father. But Mr. Grainger said he had to discuss a business-matter with Mr. Ferris.

Right after lunch next day John Ferris called for her. He hadn't asked his friends in because they would have to hurry to make the club-house in time for the first match. So Evelyn ran upstairs to put her face a bit to rights and hurried out to join them. She had on her new figured organdie dress and carried Grandma Sheldon's old Paisley shawl. When she had first tried out the combination on Aunt Carrie her aunt had cried out rapturously:

"If only your grandmother could see you!"

And Evelyn had said that she believed in her heart that Grandma Sheldon could see her. She said that sometimes she had felt her grandmother so close that it seemed as if she had only to put out her hand to touch her.

The Dixons proved to be loads of fun. Bess—she insisted on Eve calling her Bess—was delicious. A tiny little thing. She only came to Evelyn's chin. Tommy wasn't much taller. His almost white hair and ruddy complexion added something indefinable to the generally droll expression of his face. Tommy said it went with the business. Meaning the real-estate business. Evelyn didn't know much about real-estate agents. She had never seen one before. It seemed odd that these two were a married couple. In fact, they had only been married six months. "Just a little warming-up canter," said Bess.

There were two wicker chairs under the awning of the after-deck of John's new launch. In these the two girls sat and burbled on as if they had known each other all their lives. Bess whispered to Evelyn a few intimate details about Tommy. They had more fun together! She had only known Tommy a month before she had married him. Evelyn ought to try it. And all the while they were spinning along over the dancing waters of the Sound on their way to the Greenwich Yacht Club and the Connecticut state-championships in tennis.

It was inevitable that the thought should occur to Evelyn of the ride she had had just two years before this under conditions so similar—but with what a world of difference!

The thought cast over her, temporarily, a mantle of sadness. She found herself talking very soberly to Tommy Dixon who had changed places with his wife while Bess went crawling all over the boat with John, going into raptures over everything she looked at. The idea back of little Mrs. Dixon's incessant enthusiasm soon became a little over-obvious to Evelyn. But John seemed to enjoy talking to her. She kept staring up at John with her big, baby blue eyes as if to say, "Oh, you wonderful man!"

Mr. Dixon was explaining to Evelyn how far-sighted John was in business, how he was one of the men that were revolutionizing merchandising methods in America; the quiet way he had of telling a fellow where to get off; how John talked over everything with Tommy and the big plans they were working out together. Tommy said that he had to be back in New York at eight o'clock that very night to close a ten-year lease on a store in Babylon. Evelyn asked where Babylon was. She had thought it a town in the Bible.

"A remarkable fellow, John Ferris. He does it all—you'd never think there was a thing on his mind, would you?"

Evelyn said she had never thought about it. She looked over at the remarkable fellow who stood in the prow of the boat pointing over to the lighthouse which they were passing. Mrs. Dixon had her hand on his shoulder. He had grown stouter in the last year or so. He looked enormous beside little Bess Dixon. Powerful. As always, she was conscious of his heavy chin and jaw. As always, the thought flashed through her that she would hate to be the object of his anger. But faintly now. A feeling of pride in him overlay it. Tommy was telling her what a big heart John had.

"I s'pose I'm the closest friend he's got. But he never talks about his private affairs. I'd never have known a thing about your father's factory except by accident."

"The factory?"

"The fact is, John needs it about as much as he does a tin ear. Don't say I said it. It's none of my business."

"Of course not," murmured Evelyn.

"I told him so last night. But I may be wrong, too. I don't know what he's going to do with it now that he has it."

"Who?"

"John. You know what the building is." Tommy made a gesture with both hands as if he were tossing some very light material into the air.

Her throat felt choked.

"He's bought papa's factory?"

Tommy nodded solemnly.

"It's as good as closed. Your father is to have all the time he wants to clean up. Between you and me the whole thing was one-quarter business and three-quarters friendship. That's the kind of a fellow John is. I mean with a friend. I've seen him, in a deal, hard as rock and just as easy to move."

"I guess so," murmured Evelyn. A film in her eyes obscured her vision. Indistinctly she saw John and Bess coming toward them.

"Hello, old socks!" cried Tommy. "What are you doing with my wife?"

Evelyn took little part in the conversation that followed. A jumble of thoughts rooted in emotion confused her. The factory. He had sold the factory. Pianos. No more Grainger pianos. Why? "Jepson Grainger and Sons, Manufacturers." Chess. Boston Conservatory.

"A penny for your thoughts!" cried John, grinning at her. And instantly her blood was in her face.

When they were all seated in the chairs on the back porch of the club-house overlooking the courts of play Evelyn tried to shake herself loose from this web of aimless thinking. John Ferris sat behind her and leaned forward once in a while to explain the score, or a well-executed shot. She could feel his warm breath on her neck. The acrid smoke of his cigar made her cough.

"Oh," mumbled he. "Excuse me." And threw it out on the lawn. It wasn't one-third smoked.

"Really," she said, glancing back at him, "I don't mind smoke one bit." She laughed, embarrassed, remembering what had happened just one year ago. "It just got into my nose."

"S-sh!" said Tommy. All four players were dancing about. "Holy Smokes! Some rally!" He clapped violently. Bess who knew nothing whatever of what it was all about squeaked as if a mouse were under her chair.

During the intermission between the fourth and deciding sets a waiter brought tall glasses from which thin glass tubes protruded. John stood over Evelyn and held out a glass.

"Try it."

There was an exceedingly pleasant note in his voice. She glanced up at him. Bess bubbled over.

"Isn't she a picture!—with her darling old grandmother's shawl." Again Evelyn's treacherous face went back on her. "You're the loveliest thing!"

"Oh, please! Don't be silly!"

"I'm not silly. I'm honest. If I had another one of these things I'd be liable to say anything. Isn't it heavenly?"

It was rather delicious. Clara used to have a word for it. It bitzled. A peculiar flavor.

"What is it?"

"They call it a silver-fizz," said John.

At length the Dixons hurried away to catch the four-forty-five. While Tommy had talked to John about the business-matter ahead of him Bess was urging Evelyn to visit her in Brooklyn.

"We'll have no end of a lark! I'm dying there among all those old frumps. J'ever hear of Brooklyn society? There's more doing in Baltimore where I come from in one minute than has happened in Brooklyn since the Civil War. Do come!"

Evelyn murmured something about plans for the winter, and her music, and Boston.

"Rats!" Mrs. Dixon nudged her and rolled her eyes toward John. "Don't go to Boston."

Then Tommy pulled her away with him.

"By-by! See you in Brooklyn."

They didn't stay long after the Dixons had left. John said:

"Let's beat it. What do you say? I think the chairs on my boat are much more comfortable, don't you?"

Evelyn smiled her sweetest. She felt suddenly dismayed at the prospect of riding back to Stamford alone with John Ferris. She drew her shawl about her. But the sun was shining.

"I've got plenty of wraps on the boat," said John.

She followed him as he made his way through the crowd, nodding casually to this one and that. Evelyn could feel the eyes of all of them pricking little holes in her back.

At length they were together in the two chairs on the after-deck and Oscar, the captain, was guiding them along the winding channel of the harbor.

"Magnificent day!" observed John.

"Perfectly lovely," murmured Evelyn.

"Need another wrap?"

"Nothing! I'm perfectly happy."

She wasn't. Or, was she? She wasn't sure. One moment she felt like the princess of Bagdad—whoever she may have been—and the next very much as she had felt when she had first sat in Miss Conklin's class in Rosemary, thrilled but apprehensive, not knowing what was expected of her. For some absurd reason she couldn't get Aunt Pru out of her mind. Her thoughts kept running off on other tangents. She wanted to show John Ferris that she could be very charming, alone like this; that she was a good chum—interesting. But she could think of nothing whatever that was interesting. She knew she was acting stiff and affected. She wanted to show him that she appreciated—what?

"Mr. Ferris! Please tell me what papa—"

"Eve! For heaven's sake, don't call me Mister Ferris. That's unkind."

"Oh, it just slipped out."

"Say John."

"John."

He grinned.

"You say it as if it hurt. It is a bum name."

"It isn't, at all! But—all my life you have seemed so much older than I, and—"

"Do I seem so terribly much older to you?"

"Well, aren't you?"

He laughed, boyishly.

"I don't know. Am I?" His stare embarrassed her.

"I don't know either. You've always seemed to me awfully— What shall I say? I've been a little afraid of you. Honest, I have. Why is that so funny?"

"Funny! It's awful! My God, it's an awful handicap!"

She didn't intend it that way.

"What difference does it make? Sometimes I feel as old as the hills. Sometimes as if I were nothing but a child."

He was still grinning at her.

"That's precisely what you are."

She glanced at him. The corridor of the Waldorf Hotel. Her glance flickered down.

"I'm not!"

"A child-woman. You always will be." His eyes narrowed. "I was born old." Something in his tone made Evelyn pity him. There was a moment's silence. "Do you mind my saying something silly—for an old fellow?"

"Please don't say that."

"What? I was going to say something very nice."

"I mean—I don't mean—"

He laughed.

"You're a dear! I was about to tell you that when you look at me so solemnly with those very beautiful gray eyes you're the loveliest little woman I've ever run across.—But I won't say it. What did you start to ask about your father?"

"I don't know," she said, utterly confused. "About the factory. Why has he—"

He interrupted her with sudden gravity.

"Your father and I understand each other perfectly, Eve. He's the salt of the earth. But your father has about as much chance in modern business competition as—" He smiled. "If I can do anything to relieve his mind a little and—make

things a little easier—maybe you know his business is all shot—Oh, let's not talk about that. That's a business deal. I think the world of your father. You know that, don't you?" Evelyn nodded. There were tears in her eyes.

"You're awfully good," she murmured.

"I want to talk about something else. Something that's in behind most of what I do and think about, anyway. May I? Maybe you think I'm an idiot. Probably I am. I don't know what you think. You remember that night last Christmas—in the Waldorf?"

Her face flushed.

"It wasn't Christmas."

"New Year's then. It was the first time I realized— No. It wasn't the first time. I've been half in love with you ever since you were knee-high. It's a fact, Eve." A vibrance in his tone betrayed the emotion that underlay his quiet words. Those words had stunned her. Unconsciously she gripped the arms of her chair. Indistinctly she heard him, his voice gathering intensity as he hurried on. "That night, when you said you were engaged—I woke up. I realized you were a woman. Realized what a damn fool I'd been. Then Edith told me you'd broken your engagement." A stream of words. Another shock. She felt his hands on hers. "Listen, Eve, I want you to marry me. I've watched you grow up. I've batted around all over Europe. I've told myself a million times in the last year you were the only girl I'd ever marry. I can give you a home and comforts and all the things you ought to have. You've known me all your life. I want to make you happy. Want to make you all happy. I want you to bear me children. You're beautiful. I love you. I swear I do. Do you think you could love me, and— My God! What a fool—"

"Who?" she asked, faintly.

"That damned Swede!" He nodded savagely at Oscar who stood by the wheel with his back to them, staring fixedly into the blue and gold ahead. "Why did I bring him along?" Evelyn gave a hysterical cackle. Her body was trembling. She heard hoarse words as one does before dropping into

anesthesia. "No man could love you more than I love you, I swear to God. I—I could—Eve!—Oscar! Stop somewhere! We want to stop somewhere!"

He jumped up and ran forward to the captain. In a sudden calm like that at the core of a tornado, a sudden silence enveloped in a ceaseless roar, she sat hunched stiffly in her chair lest she move a fraction of an inch and by that fraction be sucked into annihilation. A feeling of helplessness in the grip of something more powerful than her resistance, helplessness amid a swirl of concepts that were not thoughts, in which pride, fear, gratitude, amazement, triumph added volume to a faint surge of physical passion within her. He was calling her name. There was an immense joyousness in his tone.

"Eve! We're going to stop here. Look!"

She shook her head, violently. They were rounding Shippan Point. But she was not looking. Her protest had no relation to the past, or to any external circumstance.

"Don't stop," she said in a choked voice. "Go on, please! Don't stop!"

And felt her muscles relaxing, felt his arms about her, felt herself lifted up, and didn't care how, or where, and couldn't see because she kept her eyes tight shut, couldn't speak because her breath was being sucked from her body by his passionate kisses.

Then she heard him laughing and found herself crumpled in her chair and realized that the sun was still in the sky and that Oscar was still staring out ahead of them as if he were riveted to the deck.

"I know he saw us!"

"I don't give a tinker's dam!—Do you?"

And again she shook her head violently.

Later, very much later, they were stealing silently to their anchorage in the harbor at Stamford. For a moment only the soft swish of water under the launch's prow broke the evening stillness about them. Oscar was up forward with a boat hook with which to pick up their mooring buoy. John was standing at the wheel. Evelyn was standing very, very

close to him. His arm was about her waist. She was holding the Paisley shawl wrapped closely about her.

"If you wish me to I will come with you," he mumbled.

"Starboard!" growled Oscar.

"No! I'd rather tell them—alone," she murmured. Then, after a moment's silence: "Do you know, I think I've loved you for—for ever so long. Only I didn't dare think about it."

"Think," echoed John, "of the time we have lost!"

"Hardaport!" growled Oscar.

"Righto! And now! Now you've got the heart to ask me to wait another whole year?"

"But you promised!" purred Evelyn, supremely happy and supremely ignorant. She felt, with an exquisite thrill, his strong arm tighten about her. "And, anyway, it won't be so hard at all, because I shall write to you every day!"

The consequence of all this was that Evelyn did not enter the Boston Conservatory that fall. When she told her father, that night, the reason why she was not going, she understood that his emotion was the result of very complicated causes. She was suddenly thrilled by the fact that she was talking to her father in the rôle of comforter. In this new consciousness and pride all doubt, all hesitation in her own mind about marriage with John Ferris dissolved like a morning mist. She felt suddenly mature, courageous, eager to shoulder her share of life's responsibilities, anticipating them as a child anticipates a new game.

"How little we know," sighed Aunt Carrie, "of what lies immediately ahead of us!"

And Evelyn agreed with her—with certain reservations.

Evelyn agreed with every one during those golden days of an unprecedentedly lovely autumn. She agreed with Aunt Pru when Aunt Pru asserted that a difference of ten years between a husband and wife—in favor of the wife—was the ideal condition in marriage since a woman was at her prime about forty whereas a man usually reached his peak somewhere around fifty. Between fifty and fifty-five. She agreed with Mrs. Grainger that, considering all circumstances, a church-wedding was to be preferred to a home-affair like Edith's and

made, on the whole, less trouble and very little more expense, if any. She agreed with old Mr. Ferris who asked what the dickens difference did it make, anyway, so long as it was done right and regular.

She agreed with Howard whom she visited, now, in his little cottage in the outskirts of Greenwich, when he defiantly asserted that whatever the family thought about him he was, in fact, just as good a Grainger and just as capable of holding his head up as any one in the whole damn family. Old Jepson Grainger had been a mechanic and proud of it. And their old great-great-granddad had let his farm go to the devil because he was always tinkering with inventions. Howard himself was just then at work on one which he tried to explain to his sister for two solid hours. Some kind of an engine that would go without steam. Only Howard's wouldn't go on the afternoon Evelyn was there. Naphtha exploded inside it. Howard's wife finally rescued Evelyn. The new Mrs. Grainger said that Howard was always puttering around with some toy like that instead of weeding the garden, or painting the fence. Sometimes it was hard for Evelyn to believe that Howard was her brother, and Edith's brother. They spoke of Edith. Howard said he had never had much use for her. Evelyn scolded him for being bitter. Why?

"It's all right!" said Howard cheerfully. "It's all right! She won't ever bother me. God knows I won't ever bother her. 'Spose she thinks she's somebody, now, with that fat slob banker of hers—"

"Howard! Please don't talk in that disgusting way. I don't like it!"

"Oh, don't pay any attention to him," said Mrs. Grainger, laughing. "He's such a rough-neck!"

No. Howard had very little of the true Grainger blood in him. Certainly less of the Sheldon. Evelyn was unfamiliar with horticultural terminology. Otherwise she might have spoken of her brother Howard as a sport.

She agreed with every one—except with John Ferris about the date of their wedding. Even here she made one concession after another. First, it was set for a year ahead. Then

it was to be in the month of June. Then Easter was discussed and a trip to the Bermudas. Evelyn had thought of Grandma Sheldon's romance and murmured: "It would be lovely so."

Now he kept coaxing and pleading for Christmas plus Bermuda because that would make it just one year after he and she had both first realized that they loved each other. And she kept correcting him. It wasn't Christmas at all. It was New Year's. When she canvassed her family for moral support she found no one in favor of long engagements. Aunt Carrie thought them altogether too great a strain on one. It was better, sighed Aunt Carrie, to have it over. She acted very tragic about the whole thing.

Then, one Saturday early in September, Evelyn surrendered lock, stock and barrel. On this Saturday John took her to Brooklyn to see a real-estate bargain which Tommy had picked up. For a quick turnover, John said.

Evelyn had never been in Brooklyn before. Brooklyn and John Ferris seemed to have some intimate relation to each other. They turned into a broad thoroughfare.

"Flatbush Avenue," said John. "Look at the corner over there." He nodded his head toward a smart-looking shop with great show-windows forming a sharp angle at the junction of two streets. "That's ours."

"The Ferris Chain Shoe-Stores."

The glistening gold letters dazzled her. Ours! She squeezed his hand.

"How lovely!"

"It isn't so bad, is it?"

"I think it's wonderful!"

She wasn't thinking of a shoe-display. Here was a man of power whose delight was in giving her happiness. This was evidence of his effort and his energy. But she must be for him comfort and rest and inspiration.

"We're selling a thousand pairs a week out of that little dump."

"I can't imagine it!"

They rode on past a railroad station, past scattered stores and dilapidated houses to a great circular space forming the

entrance to a beautifully wooded tract. On the right, scattered houses with brownstone fronts faced unpaved streets. On the left—bare, unkempt hills, gouged out to permit of an isolated building, or ripped apart for the grading of a street.

"Prospect Park," said John. "Here we are. Turn in here, driver. How do you like it?" They stopped before a building of red brick and sandstone, very new, very square and bare, facing the park. It was the only house on the block. Another stood some distance down the street. Evelyn rather decidedly didn't like it. However, it was none of her business. "It has every imaginable convenience!" exclaimed John as he opened the front door with a key attached to his ring.

It had. Its floors shone. Its walls glowed. Its woodwork glistened. Sunlight, streaming through the big windows of its white-enameled kitchen, dazzled. A room for a maid opened off this. Adjoining, a maid's private bath. They returned through the dining-room, a room with built-in bookcases, a parlor, to the hall. John had done all the talking.

"There's something about it—" began Evelyn, and hesitated. She had never imagined a house at once so perfectly appointed and so indefinably unattractive.

"Come upstairs," said John with a faint undertone of disappointment. So she began to admire everything. Immediately she could see John's enthusiasm mounting.

A huge front bedroom looked out over the park from three great windows. Between it and a second bedroom in the rear was a quite incredible bath. From the rear end of the hall opened a long room with dormer-windows through which the afternoon sun poured in.

"Isn't it marvelous?" raved John. "You'd think you were out in Kansas. Not a sound from the street."

Evelyn gazed out through a dormer-window over a parched and melancholy hill about which two mangy-looking goats were rambling disconsolately. Beyond were roofs of houses massed on lower levels.

"Won't have anybody crowding out your light," said John. "All the land on this block goes with the house. Two hundred and fifty front by a hundred and twenty deep." He

was fumbling in his pocket. She remembered Frank Marshall's talk about land and building houses on it for speculation. "Here." He handed her a paper. "Read it." He put his arm about her shoulder and unfolded the document, so that while she read he was sort of half-embracing her.

"I don't understand a word of such things. What is it?"

"A deed. Read the first part of it. There. 'Between John H. Ferris, party of the first part'—go on."

"'And Evelyn Grainger, party of the second part, witnesseth:'"

"That's enough. Put it in your pocket."

"What is it?"

"I tell you it's the deed to the house and the land."

"But—"

"It's yours. Put it in your pocket."

"Mine! I—I don't know what you mean."

He laughed. She looked at him with wide frightened eyes.

"But—John!"

"Kiss me. For heaven's sake what are you crying about?" And Tom and Bess lived only a few blocks away on Sixth Street and Eighth Avenue. And—"Look, Eve. Tell me, honestly. Did you ever see a room fuller of sunshine and fresh air—I mean if you had the windows open—and—You don't seem to get the idea of this room! What is it?"

"It's a room," she said laughing and wiping the wet off her cheeks.

"A room! Can't you imagine three or four kiddies romping around here and cluttering everything up? It's a nursery! Can't you see it's a nursery?"

And while she hid her face on his shoulder he stretched out his arm as if measuring a certain distance from the floor and cried boisterously:

"Eve! Look! One!" and raised his arm a couple of inches. "Two! Three!"

On the following day everybody immediately concerned was informed that Evelyn had at length decided to marry John Ferris on the fifteenth of December, which would be on a Wednesday.

One night, a few weeks later, old John growled across the chess-board to his neighbor Charlie that the devil only knew what would become of the leather-business and shoe-stores if this sort of thing were to keep up much longer. Young John wasn't worth a ten-penny cut nail. Everybody was telegraphing around and writing letters which the fellow never opened. He'd certainly be darned glad when the whole darn fol-de-rol was over and settled. Maybe the fellow could get his mind down to business once more. And Charlie smiled and said:

"I guess I'll castle."

"You little darling!" mumbled John out in the hammock on the porch where Evelyn lay cuddled beside him running her fingers through his heavy mop of black hair, "I will carry you through life on my hands—in cotton, like that!" and he cupped his great paws and jumped up and tiptoed around the porch as if he were carrying something indescribably fragile and precious. It wasn't true, of course, that she was anything of the sort. But it was wonderfully pleasant to let him think so.

It was only when she was in his arms and felt the possibility of their enormous pressure, when she felt the grip of his great hands on her shoulders that she had a sensation of helplessness, of indefinable unrest. She would push him away and turn aside her face. And then he would loose her and stand with sunken shoulders. An expression would come into his eyes that filled her with a queer jumble of emotions which she never could separate into pity, and delight, and triumph, and remorse.

Insensibly she was being pitched higher and higher. With the passing weeks she herself grew more and more impatient for that day, that Wednesday, when all this feverish preparation would climax in the great event of her life and she, as in a bath of fire, be reborn into a new existence. A wife! The word formed on her lips as if from the trembling of her body. Her thinking was all of this sort. Semi-physical.

On the afternoon of the day before her wedding Evelyn paid a last call on Aunt Carrie. Together they walked out to

the cemetery and Grandma Sheldon's and her mother's graves. Evelyn brought with her a great bunch of flowers which she had stolen, here one and there one, from those that had already been sent to decorate the house for the wedding. The ground was frozen solid. In the angles of hedges and on north slopes of depressions clung remnants of snow which had fallen a week before. A sharp wind blew in off the Sound and gray clouds were banked in the north and east. Aunt Carrie was muffled close in her heavy woolen shawl. Evelyn tried to protect her bouquet of flowers beneath the folds of her coat.

Together they knelt between the little mounds that marked her mother's and Grandma Sheldon's graves. As Evelyn arranged some of the longer-stemmed roses in a little mason-jar that stood there she hummed an old, old love-melody which suddenly welled up from the depths of her memory. She glanced up and saw tears running down her aunt's cheeks. But Aunt Carrie always cried a little when she came here. Yet she always loved to come. Evelyn, herself, was profoundly, solemnly happy. Because she was profoundly happy she could sympathize the more with her lonely old aunt. The thought of John came to her and the immensity of his love. She turned and laid the remainder of her flowers at the head of her grandmother's grave. Between these two she could dedicate herself to him. Between these two. To-morrow she would be his wife.

"Don't cry, auntie. I believe they are very happy to know that I am going to be married. Don't you? I think that to-morrow they will both be with us. I like to think that."

"I shall be thinking of you to-morrow, dear—at this time. I shall be praying for you—for your happiness."

And because Aunt Carrie was crying, Evelyn cried a little, too. Out of sympathy.

6

A slight, convulsive shudder awoke her. She must do something—something frightfully urgent. She started from her pillow and stared out in the half-daze of suddenly broken

sleep. Her window framed faint, gray light. A soughing of wind through the bare branches of trees outside. An insistent, gentle sibilance of snowflakes striking window-panes and sifting in through an opened lower-sash to the floor. A confused recollection of desperate dream-adventures. Something to do. She smiled. And sank back again upon her pillow.

Morning. Snowing! Her wedding day! And that light would grow stronger and day would be there and twelve o'clock would come. High noon. And while she was being married these millions and millions of tiny flakes would be dropping on the roof of the church and on her home and on his home and on trees and hills—like kisses, like little, soft, angel's kisses. Stirring within her an immense energy, an eagerness tempered with fear. Before that light faded again, became faint like this, she would be a man's wife. That mysterious something would have happened. She was suddenly frightened at the ordeal ahead of her. She knew nothing. How would it all happen?

It wasn't that she was really frightened. There was nothing to be frightened about. It was because he might think she was stupid and— He had known so many other girls and women. That was the trouble. She had asked him if he had loved that French woman he had once told her about. He had only laughed at her. He kept denying that he had ever loved any one, had only done what every man does; that it was all dead and buried.

A difference, he said, between a man's love and a man's passion. What difference? He certainly hadn't made it very clear. Two names for the same thing. He kept saying that his love for her was very, very different. How different?

That's when she had promised to let herself go. A silly request. It showed he didn't know her as well as he thought he did. Could she help it if she knew nothing? If he realized how she longed and longed to know sometimes until she was ashamed and frightened at herself!

She jumped out of bed and ran over to close her window. The carpet beneath it was dusted with snow. The shock of

cold on her bare feet was painfully delicious. For a moment she bent down and gazed out into gray nothingness from which started infinitely those feathery flakes that were burying all the ugliness of the world beneath a mantle of indescribable beauty.

So this day would mantle her.

She hopped back into her now warmer-seeming bed and cuddled down beneath the covers and rubbed the wet and cold from her feet with the folds of her nightgown.

Never more would she wake up, alone, like this.

A picture of the room beneath her. Flowers. Gifts. Some of them from people she had never heard of. One of them, a crystal rose-bowl, in which lay a card: "Lieut. Kurt M. Schelling, U.S.A." It had cost her such an endless debate to send him an invitation! She felt the pricking of tears. Gifts! Because her girlhood was over. She saw two grips by the bureau. One packed and strapped; the other, smaller, open and almost empty. This would have in it all her pretties which Edna had helped her select. This one she would unpack to-night. She shivered. To-night! Alone. In a room in the Waldorf Hotel. And to-morrow in a cabin on the steamer to Bermuda. Suppose she should be seasick? But first—to-night! First twelve o'clock! Faster and more confused her thoughts came toppling in upon her.

Then the whirl of that day caught her up and spun her along with it in a kind of emotional anesthesia.

She dressed, she breakfasted, she listened to advice, complaints about the weather, where she would find the hot-water bottle in the lower tray of her trunk. She packed. She put perfume on her pink silk slip embroidered with little moss-roses. She let them dress her. She stood with her arm about her father and gazed with him at the display in the parlor. She mopped her eyes and sniffled a little while he explained to her that he was perfectly contented with everything as it was, only she must not allow her new duties and distractions to drive music out of her life. How could that be possible with that glorious grand piano which had been only one of his

wedding gifts standing already in the parlor of her Brooklyn home?

She let John come in for just one single minute to kiss her, to burst into rapture at the sight of her in her wedding-dress, to tell her exactly where and at what precise minute to be behind the right-hand door, in the entry, not in the vestry. And to wear goloshes because it was snowing like hell.

But, of course, they had to be late. In spite of everything they had to be late. Because at the last minute poor, dear papa couldn't find his white gloves. It was Mary Grainger who found them, not Aunt Pru. Out on the kitchen sink! And Aunt Pru, who was, naturally, hunting for them upstairs where they belonged, breathless, all but speechless, wanted to be told, on her way down the stairs, how in the name of all common-sense Charlie Grainger could leave his white gloves out on the kitchen sink, at a time like this when—but her father had hurried Evelyn out of the front door and slammed it behind them.

It was too bad. She wanted to say so many, many things to her father in these last few minutes with him before she left him, in a way, forever. And losing his gloves like that, and being late, and having all the uproar about it sort of threw a damper on conversation. But snow was falling, now, in those great, furry flakes that had such a mysteriously exhilarating effect on her, and she burst out laughing with a happiness too great to control. She gave a gasp of delight when she jumped out of the closed carriage into a little vortex of swirling snow and half ran to the church-entry, clinging to her father's arm.

They were all waiting for her in the vestibule. Tommy Dixon, and Edna, her matron of honor, and a Doctor Henderson of Brooklyn who was John's best man. She had only met him once, at luncheon. John was a hundred times more nervous than she.

"Ooh!" she cooed, stamping her feet.

Tommy knelt before her.

"You haven't any rubbers on!"

"I—said—go—loshes!" moaned John, swaying his head

from side to side. The great bell in the tower above them clanged the first stroke of twelve. The floor beneath her trembled.

Evelyn shot a swift glance at her father who was holding his hands behind him. She heard the soft impact of her goloshes dropping to the floor. She giggled hysterically. Edna was adjusting her veil. Old Mr. Cortelyou, the sexton, bustled up, rubbing his white-gloved hands together.

"Ready, children, ready? Dr. Beebe would like—"

"Just one minute!" cried Edna.

Evelyn smiled faintly, nodded, paled. The sexton disappeared. She was aware of rolling organ-music. Some one hurried in, stamping feet, and on into the church.

"Lock the door!" growled John.

She felt herself sinking into a vacuum.

"Remember now—" cried John from the doorway. Then Doctor Henderson pushed him out.

"What?" she asked plaintively.

"Don't bother about him!" soothed Edna. "He's completely rattled. You just—my dear! What's the matter?"

The organ had pealed out the opening chord of the wedding-march.

What happened from that time on was a confused blur in her memory. People stretching out in rows on either side of her. The patting of her father's hand on her arm. A heavy, benumbing odor of flowers. Words. Music enveloping her. The voice of John. Her own. "I—do!" A faint trickle of cold that thrilled from her finger through all her body, and on through infinite space and time.

Only when she looked out through a swirling mist of snow to see objects hurtling past did it seem to her that the spinning earth was once more catching up to her. Only then when their train in full flight was rushing them toward New York, toward the Waldorf Hotel, toward—

"My wife! My wife! My—Eve! My own—little woman!"

They were alone, alone in a universe all their own. She

heard the deep, caressing murmur of his voice. She stared out into a gray void. He laughed with delight.

"Was I awfully cranky this morning?"

"I don't remember," she said, perfectly truthfully.

"I was afraid you—I get that way. I imagined all sorts of things!"

She glanced up at him, shyly.

"What difference does it make, dear—now?"

Stopping, starting, the shriek of brakes, a moaning whistle far ahead. A white, blurred, unreal world behind fluttering veils of an early winter's night. And over and around her and beneath her, gripping her insistently, a force which was the passion of this man who was her husband; this husband who was carrying her out and away into a world as strange as it was fascinating, on the threshold of which she trembled with desire and with fear.

Hurrying of men and women. City streets white and black, with flurries of snow in globes of light. The jolting of their cab on a rough pavement. The roar and rattle of street-cars. And always the eagerness of his voice, always the pressure of his arm about her. In the cab he kissed her passionately.

The lobby of the Waldorf. Once before she had gone up in this lift with John Ferris. Thousands of years ago; in a previous existence. She glanced at him. He was grinning down at her over the shoulder of a man's overcoat sparkling with little drops that had been snowflakes.

"Do you remember?"

She nodded her head. The man in the overcoat turned to look at her. She could see an expression of pleasure light up his face. She smiled at him.

"Excuse me," he said, "I am crowding you."

"Oh, not at all," she murmured and flushed. Could he tell? Where? To what?

"Ours," said John and pushed on her arm.

Down a hall behind a boy in uniform, carrying her grips. She was faint. She stood in a huge room while John fished for change. A door clicked shut behind them. She was swung up off her feet.

"Oh—God! At last!"

She lay crushed in his arms, helpless, yet with every muscle tense. Now? A spasm of terror.

"John! Don't! I'm frightened!"

Slowly he lowered her until her feet again touched the floor. He was laughing, but breathlessly.

"You—darling—little foolish! What are you afraid of?" She hid her face in his greatcoat.

"I don't know. Don't be angry. I love you. I love you!"

"My—little wife!"

A sharp rap on their door. She pushed him violently from her. A chambermaid entered with an armful of towels. Evelyn turned to the bureau to hide her face.

"Whadoyewant?" growled John.

"Excuse me, sir. The storm has us all balled up with the laundry."

She went into a bathroom the door of which stood open.

"Why the devil—" he checked himself. "Do you like them, Eve?"

She was staring at a great vase of roses on the bureau. She hadn't seen them.

"Oh—yes! They are—lovely!"

The maid came out of the bathroom, grinned at Eve, went on out and closed the door.

"Do you think she—" The rest was smothered.

"What do you care? What's the matter with these people!" Another rap on the door. A voice outside.

"The other grip, sir."

"Well, bring it in and—" a boy shoved in John's huge, yellow bag. "Now—beat it!" He tossed a coin in the direction of the boy who grabbed it from the floor and hurried out. "My God! It's a procession!"

He went over and locked the door. Evelyn laughed nervously. It had given her time to get hold of herself. The note in John's voice, not new to her, had also helped. He used to talk in that tone with Edna about the launch. It was all right. She had recovered from her terror. He unbuttoned her coat, threw it with his own on a couch near the bed.

Everything about the room was huge, heavy, luxurious. She avoided looking at the bed. She tried to ignore its presence. It was immense. It dominated the whole great room. It was not a bed. It was a mountain. When she turned her back on it its blue-brown mass frowned out at her from the great mirror of the wardrobe-door. She bent over her open suitcase, packed that morning with all her beautiful, silky underthings, enticing, exquisite. On top lay the night-gown of white chiffon and lace which Edna had given her. The sight of it gave her a thrill of delight.

"Don't unpack, Eve. We're only here for the night. We have to be on board by twelve."

She wanted to hold up all these beautiful things and have him burst into rapture over them. The hours of delight she had had anticipating the moment when she would stand before him, beautiful, her hair loosed, sweet-smelling, for him to work his will on her!

"Excuse me," he said, and went into the bathroom and closed the door.

She stood before the dressing-table and stared at her reflection. Was she beautiful? Oh, was she beautiful for him? She tried not to hear water running from a faucet and the flush of a toilet. She took out her dainty toilet-articles and arranged them neatly on the dressing-table. Another rap at the door. She waited for a moment, startled, then went timidly to the door and unlocked it. She held it open a few inches.

"Shall I serve?"

"I—I don't know."

The waiter looked at his pad; then up over the door.

"Eight-twenty-three. This is eight-twenty-three?"

"I—I don't know."

The man looked at her suspiciously.

"You ordered dinner in the room at seven."

"Please—just a minute."

John opened the door of the bathroom. He was drying his hands on a towel.

"Want to wash up a bit?"

"There's a waiter—" she nodded toward the door, "says you ordered dinner—"

"Sure!" said John in immense good-humor. He went to the doorway, wiping his hands and talked to the man outside. He turned to Evelyn. "Gee! I never was hungrier in my life! Were you?"

She laughed and shook her head.

"No."

It was her first fib.

"I wonder what they're all thinking about, now?"

"Envying us!" Again he came toward her.

"Wait!" She said, backing away, just to tease him.

"Wait! Always wait!" He laughed. "I can't wait!" He seized her wrist and pulled her toward him.

"Don't! The waiter will come. Ouch! You hurt! Honestly you do!"

He was holding her over his head in his great, pinching paws. She was a child. He was laughing up at her. Frank Marshall and Edith were in the hammock.

"Forgive me!"

The waiter came in with a folding-table, covered it, set it and served an iced drink which John declared one hundred per cent. She felt a slight stimulation. She laid two roses on the table, crossed between two plates of iced oysters.

"Don't you really want to—wash your hands?" asked John. She shook her head. "Don't be—foolish," he said, kindly enough.

She knew she was silly. She simply couldn't. The intimacy of that bathroom had something indescribably repulsive about it.

"Come!" she cried with great gayety and sat in one of the chairs.

The waiter popped a bottle of champagne and filled their glasses. John nodded toward the door. When the waiter was gone John jumped up and pulled her from her chair and kissed her very gently on her lips and eyes and forehead. A wave of passionate tenderness flowed over her. He held up his glass and said:

"To you, dearest little woman on earth!" She raised her glass to drink. "Wait a minute!" They were both holding up their glasses. He was smiling down at her. "Here's to our first—boy!" Her face flamed crimson and champagne spilled from her glass. She drank a swallow. "All of it!"

She drank all of it, recklessly. The thought flashed to her: "I must let myself go!" But every nerve within her was taut and vibrant.

"We'll have another bottle, yes?"

She shook her head violently.

"Please!—don't drink so much."

John cocked his eye at her drolly.

"Little—devil!"

"Why?"

"Perfectly right!"

At length they had finished dinner. She had nibbled at her portions. The waiter pocketed his tip, grinned, folded his table and left them with a significant leer and a "Happy dreams!"

They were alone. John bolted the door. When he turned to look at her the expression on his face startled her. For the first time in her life she looked full, and bravely, at the red, raw, naked passion of a man.

"At last!" he said with a queer choke in his voice.

Her eyes closed. She drew a deep breath. She felt his powerful arms close about her. She shuddered. She was on the bed. She felt his hands fumbling for the fastenings of her dress.

"John! No! Let me do it! Don't tear it! Please don't tear it!"

He was laughing. His lower lip hung down in a brutish, horrible way. He kept mumbling:

"I love you, I love you, I love you!"

"John, I beg you! Not now!— Let—me— Oh—!" His lips, his tongue. She kissed back in a frenzy of passion and terror.

She buried her face in the silken cover of the bed. She lay stripped to her silken undervest, quivering, semi-conscious.

A convulsive shudder awoke her. She must do something—something frightfully urgent! She started from her pillow and stared out in the half-daze of suddenly broken sleep. A tight-closed window framed faint, gray light. A confused recollection of hideous dream-adventures. Something to do! A guttural, insistent, periodic sibilance behind her. She shuddered and sank back with a moan upon her pillow.

There was nothing to do! It was over. Finished. There was nothing to do. A physical protest of nausea. A mental ferment of passionate revolt.

Her body ached, her arms, her legs, her back. A dull, throbbing pain in her head. Another pain. A sharp pain she had never known. The air was fetid, suffocating. She gasped for breath. She had been seared with infamy. She had been bathed in filth.

She feared to move, to make a sound. The heavy, stertorous breathing of a huge hulk asleep beside her. She had lain for hours listening to that. Unable to move. Unable to think. After hours of violence that had ended in agony. Her bowels writhed with disgust.

It was hideous.

This was marriage!

What had they all told her? Oh God, what lies! What lies! What lies!

7

Gradually the experience of that night which at the time had seemed a monstrous annihilation of all that life contained for her, or could contain, shrank to the proportions of an episode. The ugly caricature of John's face which she had looked upon in the gloom that morning when she had first awakened in bed beside him faded to a conviction that a man asleep in the gray light of dawn is not a particularly edifying spectacle.

The savageness itself of the blow she had received had helped. On the following night, in the tiny cabin of the Bermuda steamer, he had declared that she looked adorable in the nightgown Edna had given her, with those great waves

of chestnut hair rippling down over her shoulders. But at the time she was thinking only of what lay ahead of her and trying to remember that Edith, that every married woman had been in exactly this same situation.' The second afternoon out they had run into rough weather and she had gone to bed with a violent headache. On the third evening, when a gorgeous moon shone down upon them through violet spaces made visible by intimate stars they had sat together for hours in their deck-chairs, alone in the immensity of ocean and of night, talking in low tones with long intervals of silence. When, at length, they had gone to their cabin to undress for the night only a pretty embarrassment remained as the fitfully glowing ashes of what had been a conflagration.

Then the white laugh of Bermuda came to them from the green and gold of a fabled sea. Came her island of dreams; came what she had pictured through eager months as her island of dreams. And, indeed, when they landed from the steamer and she gazed down through that crystalline, incredible green to the white rock of the sea-bottom, saw palms fluttering in a dazzling sunshine, heard the raucous gabble of half-nude blacks, she squeezed the arm of John which was tucked beneath her own, smiled up at him with that shy gladness which he had learned to hunger for, and thought to herself that in a way, quite different indeed from what she had imagined, her dreams were strangely coming true.

Perhaps it was so, she reasoned with herself, that dreams come true. One dreams of some ineffably beautiful thing, foolishly, ignorantly, as a child. And then, long years afterwards, it is there. Not, of course, exactly as one dreams; yet it comes. One must only learn to recognize it. Must know it and enjoy it when it comes, as it comes. And Evelyn felt herself very wise and very sad and at the same time very much confused about what she really was and how she really felt.

One night when they were sitting out alone on the veranda of their hotel she told John the story of Grandma Sheldon as she remembered it. While she talked she could feel the

vibrant presence of her grandmother hovering over them in benediction. But John kept trying to figure out from her vague description just where this island could have been located and made guesses as to what Mr. Sheldon had dealt in. But the sea in which Grandma Sheldon's island lay was no sea that could be marked by pins on a map. And while it may have been true that Grandma Sheldon's lover-husband had dealt in rice, or coffee-beans, or rum and sugar, Evelyn could give him no information about it because she had never even thought of it before. Grandma Sheldon had fled from that far-away island with her two tiny babies. And one of these babies had been her own mother and the other was now Aunt Carrie. And that was the way that life took people and tossed them about and melted them and molded them into whatever chance place and curious shape it pleased.

When on a cold, blustery January day Evelyn stood with her husband in the entry of their new home she looked out at the snow-covered park opposite them while John fumbled in his pocket for the key, she had a keen sense of having traveled a tremendous distance, not in a circle, not going and returning, but as if she never would, or could return. And while John was trying to fit the key into the lock, she murmured:

"How different it all seems!"

With an energy which John had plainly divined beneath her girlish eagerness, with a housewifely sense developed from a thousand-and-one forgotten incidents of the past, a practicality which her husband had never suspected and which therefore delighted him the more, Evelyn set herself at the task of making of this brashly new house a home.

Now she began to understand the nature and extent of her debt to Aunt Pru.

They went out but little during those first months of marriage. John's office, at this time, was in a building on the lower west side of Manhattan. He liked to reach it in time to have his mail read before his secretary came at nine and the real work of the day began. He therefore made it a rule to leave his home no later than seven-thirty. This

meant getting up at six o'clock, for John liked plenty of time for his morning shave. Once Evelyn timidly suggested his shaving at night, but John laughed and said it was a hard job to teach an old dog new tricks. He only shaved at night when they were going out for the evening. It was one of his fixed rules. There were others.

At six-thirty in the evening she would begin to listen for the rattle of his key in the front-door lock. While they ate she would tell him of the day's incidents, of how she and Katie had pushed the piano over into the corner by the clock so as to make room for the bronze pedestal, or had found a new brand of John's favorite "rat-cheese" in the store on the corner of Third Street and Seventh Avenue. He would talk to her of shoes.

She began to look critically at shoes. In windows, on women's feet as they sauntered along Seventh Avenue below her; at pictures of shoes in magazine advertisements. She had never appreciated the complexity, the diversity, the fascinating potentialities of shoes.

Sometimes she would play for him after dinner while he sat back in the big, red-leather reading-chair and puffed contentedly at a Ruy Blas perfecto. John called it a "rye blass."

She would turn to him at the end of one of her favorite concert pieces with flushed face and shining eyes and see an expression profoundly disturbing to her flit from his heavy, tired-looking face to disappear like a faint smoke-wraith into the shaded gloom above them. It was not an expression of displeasure, nor one of disapproval. It was more negative. Once she had turned around to find him sound asleep, with his lower jaw dropped in that way that sent a shudder through her. Then she realized how worn out he was from his long day's work. She swung quietly around again on her stool and played for an hour or more soft, lulling music that would act like a soothing balm to his tired nerves.

Less frequently John would read to her. She would sit opposite him beyond the glow of their amber-shaded library lamp and resolutely tackle that amazingly cumulative tangle of socks and stockings in her dainty little sewing-basket with

its bulging top. John would sit in his big, red-leather reading-chair with his slippered feet on the piano-stool and read on in his monotonous bass until the lids of Evelyn's eyes seemed weighted with lead and she had to fight gallantly to keep her mind on what Stanley was doing away out somewhere in an African jungle and not wandering off to what she and Katie were going to do to the china-closet next day. As for the socks in her basket, they just simply accumulated.

She had never sat among so many books. She had never realized, before, how decorative books were around the walls of a room. The books of her old home in Stamford had lain always half-concealed behind doors with large glass panes which rattled when they were opened and which were polished twice a year by Aunt Pru at the spring and fall house-cleaning periods. For years she had seen the titles across their faded backs; not clearly enough to remember many.

John's books were fascinating. Blue, green, crimson, gold, the rich mahogany and chromes of the sets in leather. It dismayed her to think that one man had read all of them. She guessed there were over two thousand. They filled the shelves that stretched, five high, along one whole side of the room. She arranged and rearranged these books in color-schemes. John, who had the normal male eye for effects; that is, practically no eye at all, would be seized with sudden irrational impulses to read some particular book that she had shifted a dozen times, and demand where in hell she had stuck, for example, Max Müller's "Chips from a German Workshop." Then, if he could describe it to her, she could find it for him, sometimes instantly.

The red and gold books were for her the prize sets, and a translation of the Nibelungenlied in white vellum, illuminated, which John had bought just after his return from Germany. From handling John's books so much she learned a great many of their titles. The ambition stirred actively within her to read all these books so that she could converse intelligently with John on all subjects and not be such a ninny in his eyes. She wanted to make up all the time she had lost.

She discussed very soberly with John the question of where to begin and how much time she ought to give to this development of her mind. And he was very unsatisfactory about it, confusing her with a score of titles and authors of a dozen races, places and degrees of antiquity. At length he settled down on Chaucer. But she had read that in Rosemary and hated the very thought of it. So she started with the Nibelungenlied, which certainly went back to the beginning of things. The talks of Miss Conklin on Wagner came back to her. John had to listen to pretty dull music for a month or more. Also to Evelyn's interpretation of the Nibelungenlied, with her hopeless confusion of fact, fiction, and Wagnerian opera.

The only people whom they saw at all frequently were the Dixons. Every week or two the four would meet for an evening of five-hundred either at Bess' house, or at Evelyn's. Between eleven and twelve they would eat cheese and crackers or something like that. Bess and Evelyn would drink lemonade with a stick in it, while John and Tommy split a few bottles of beer. To Evelyn beer had something about it indefinably common. In her mind it was associated with the corner-saloon down by the wharf in Stamford, and Howard's affair with the widow who was now his wife. Of course John, who had lived in Germany, could properly drink beer. He properly drank it! Or improperly. He said it used to be nothing for him to drink ten liters of beer at a sitting in the old days. When he went to sleep on these nights his breath had a peculiar, sickening, sweetish odor. It was then that he breathed in that heavy, maddening fashion. It wasn't a snore. It was as if the world might go up in flame and smoke and he would lie right there and guggle away.

Evelyn gradually changed her mind about the Dixons. Tommy had a kind of attractiveness. He was always full of fun and a good mimic. But Bess was becoming tiresome. She was forever talking about things on the danger-line of decency. She asked Evelyn all sorts of questions about her intimate relations with John. Questions that verged on impertinence. Her salacious curiosity disgusted Evelyn. Also

her frequent declarations that she had no use for children. She acted so silly, sometimes, in John's presence that if she were not forever telling Evelyn how madly in love she was with Tommy, Evelyn would have given Bess a little plain piece of her mind. But Evelyn didn't want to do anything that might interfere with John's friendship with Tommy. John was constantly commenting on Tommy's usefulness. John would discuss leases and front-feet and alteration-costs with Tommy by the hour.

Late in May Edna spent a night with John and Evelyn just before sailing again for Europe. The same old Edna. Just as fascinating; just as impulsive, big-hearted; just as much in the same old tangle. It was a senator now. A senator from a Western state who owned iron-mines. Edna also asked pointed questions. But Edna had a right to ask, being her sister-in-law. No! Nothing like that. Evelyn had never felt healthier in her life. Happy? Of course. Why, yes. She supposed so. She guessed all men were alike. Edna, viewing the matter from the opposite pole, heartily agreed with her.

Then John came breezing in. During dinner he explained to Edna how he and Evelyn were going to spend a good part of the summer taking trips out over Long Island to visit the trade and locate strategic spots for a Ferris chain-store. They'd just take a bag between them, hop into the old buggy and drive on out into the tall timber. It would be loads of fun. Edna sighed. She said she envied them from the bottom of her heart. The next morning after a very late breakfast John took Edna back with him to New York. It had been a pleasant little break in the monotony.

Monotony. After all, it was a kind of monotony. Not an unpleasant one. There were moments, to be sure, when Evelyn felt pangs of homesickness for her father and Aunt Carrie and Grandma Sheldon's cottage and the green sobriety of Stamford. But, on the whole, her statement to Edna was correct. She was happy. Very quietly; very differently. But happy.

Intimacy with a man had, now, nothing especially shock-

ing, or distressing about it. At certain times it was disagreeable. But it was all a part of the process. Like countless millions of her fellow-women Evelyn was adjusting herself. As in the experience of countless millions of other women the ugly details and bitter disillusion of her wedding-night were buried more and more deeply beneath the rapid, desensitizing accretions of matrimony. But never, in fact, as long as she remained capable of sexual emotion, would the shock of that first contact with a male wholly fade. Never, through the years of her womanhood, would the wound of that night, physically so negligible, cease to lie, unhealable, significant, deep beneath every passionate expression of herself, beneath every equally passionate repression. Like millions of other women she believed that she had learned all there was to learn by an experience which, in fact, had rendered her all but incapable of learning.

Perhaps the largest factor in her happiness was the bottomless content of her husband when they sat alone together and talked across the dinner-table. She took an honest pride in her ability as housekeeper. But nothing like the pride that John seemed to feel. Her only weakness was in accounts. There she faltered. She never had been any good at arithmetic. John at first tried the experiment of a weekly allowance for the house-account. They just guessed at a certain figure. Then he would raise it. But he had never looked so well in his life. And their home was growing cozier week after week. What difference did it make? He was making money.

Evelyn's interest in his business grew: grew more intelligent and more actual. Gradually she began to have something like a logical notion of that curiously intricate, evolving something that was her husband's business. With this came a clearer knowledge of her husband himself. He materialized, became a known quantity. She began to estimate his values.

She was happy with him that summer as they drove together through empty stretches of country over the flat expanse of Long Island and talked with storekeepers and store-

keepers' wives and real-estate agents and hotel-keepers. The sun and the wind browned her face and flushed it with rose and threw into greater contrast the deep gray of her eyes, the almost black brows above them, the rich, chestnut-brown of her hair.

One night they sat in a little lookout perched on the brink of a hundred-foot cliff overlooking Long Island Sound. They were away out toward the end of the northern fork of that island's fishlike tail. They could see white buildings on the Connecticut shore eighteen miles across the Sound. A short distance to their left a squat, square light-tower clung white and solitary to the edge of the cliff. Behind them, on a hillock unkempt with bayberry bushes and rambling briars, stood the inn where they were to spend the night. "Rocky Point House." Rather a big boarding-house than a hotel. They had come upon it quite by chance. Evelyn had coaxed John to stop here for the night. He had humored her.

Below them a lazy swell washed and receded over a white-pebbled beach along which lay scattered boulders of granite and bluestone. A profound quiet enveloped them. A quiet indescribably a part of all that lay about and above and beneath them. They watched black tide-swirls over sunken rocks a few yards out from the shore. Away off at the rim of the world a late August sun was sinking heavily into a polychromatic haze which was both sky and sea. A peculiar sentience deep within her made Evelyn seem to herself an intimate part of this very quiet, this rugged loneliness, this colorful merging of sea and sky; as if that tide, sweeping on resistlessly before her, were flowing through herself; as if she herself were that tide. She felt within her curious, disturbing, yet delightful vibrations as if that shimmering, golden light and heat were pulsing at the core of her own being.

A boy sat with them. The son of the widow who owned and ran the Rocky Point House. He was explaining where they were. The tiny blur off to the west was Faulkner's island. In a few minutes, now, they would see the flash from its tower. New Haven lay in that direction. No.

Stamford they could not see. That lay just behind the sun.

A little to the west of the lighthouse the cliff dropped abruptly, and there the dunes began. They should see the dunes! They were glorious! If they would stay over a day or two he would take them around. At which John mumbled: "Ye Gods! Here?"

The boy had told them his dream of becoming an engineer. In another year he would be ready to enter Stevens Institute. But there wasn't much hope of it unless they had more luck with the old hotel. He talked as if he were discouraged, which seemed to Evelyn absurd in a boy of his age.

Evelyn had watched his rather handsome, eager face. He was not much younger than she. A year ago he would have seemed quite on her own level. Now he seemed to her very, very youthful. She glanced at her husband, huge, smiling, solid—like that tower out on the cliff in the sun. John met her glance.

"Shall we go in?"

"As you like, dear. It's very lovely here."

"What time do you eat—pardon me, what's your name?"

"Billard. Carrington Billard. Supper's ready, now, I guess. There's only a half dozen people here. It doesn't make any difference when you come."

"Oh, well," said John, who was nothing if not punctual, and rose.

Evelyn also rose and stretched out her arms as if to embrace it all.

"I hate to leave it," she sighed. "But I confess I am very hungry." She turned to Carrington and caught him staring at her. "It's delightful to come, like this, so unexpectedly upon a spot so beautiful." She smiled at him, seeing his face flush with pleasure. "And so, I hope, you will some day come upon all your dreams."

Later, Evelyn wished that she had not coaxed John to spend the night at Rocky Point. They had gone again to the little lookout on the cliff. But a chilly wind had sprung up after sundown and a black abyss now yawned at their feet from which came the sullen beat of the sea. They hadn't

sat there long. Evelyn, shivering a little, said she should have brought a wrap. John promptly voted for bed.

She felt a peculiar depression. Carrington Billard brought them a pitcher of ice-water and wished them happy dreams. John went out with him to see that his horse was well cared for. He always did that in a strange place before they went to sleep.

As she undressed she listened to the low moaning of a freshening wind in the eaves. She was nervous, uncomfortable. For a few minutes she felt nauseated. But that passed off. John came back, undressed and made her all cold again crawling into bed. She told him she felt tired-out and—not well. John only grunted and flopped over to his side of the bed.

For hours and hours she lay there, wide-eyed, in the semi-dark. It was only semi-dark because the rays of the great light in the tower west of them struck full on their window. The curtain which she had to pull down to shade the bed kept flapping exasperatingly. She couldn't close the window. They would suffocate in this little, ugly dump of a room. She heard every sound that was made in the house. She heard the boy Carrington go down the hall humming a popular song —"Annie Rooney"—"She's my Annie; I'm her Joe." She heard him close the window at the end of the hall, then go back past their door and down the stairs. Other sounds. Finally only the moaning of the wind over chimneys and roof.

Something she had eaten. Fried potatoes, probably. The stupid melody Carrington Billard had hummed kept running through her head with the maddening rhythm of an African tom-tom. Once she thought she would have to wake John and have him try to get some baking-soda. She had such a heartburn. But she drank water and felt better. It was a miserable night.

The next day she forgot all about it. John cursed out the rotten food in these backwoods hotels. She wished she were back in her own lovely little home in Brooklyn where she could have everything just as she wanted it.

At length they were there. Then she had one or two simi-

lar spells. Toward the end of September they were having a game of five-hundred one night with Tommy and Bess and Evelyn refused to eat a piece of Bess' Boston cream-pie on the ground of her indigestion. Tommy brought out a bottle of old Dr. Ogilvie's stomach-mixture and declared that if Evelyn would take that regularly three times a day she could eat nails and never feel 'em. Doctor Ogilvie knew more about stomachs than any other living man. So Evelyn ate the pie, took a spoonful of Tommy's pink stuff—and that finished her! That night, when she came back from the bathroom, she tearfully demanded that John send Dr. Ogilvie to her the very first thing when he went out next morning.

Then followed a disagreeable argument because John insisted on her having Dr. Henderson if anything was the matter with her. The matter with her! Was he blind? She ought to be treated with a little consideration, not scolded and —argued with—and—he wasn't scolding her! Good God! What was the sense in having an old fossil like Ogilvie when Doc Henderson was his own college chum, had been best man at their wedding, and was the best all-round doctor in Brooklyn by general agreement? She wanted an older man. One with more experience. Well, do as she damn pleased.

When Dr. Ogilvie came he insisted on examining her. He demanded of her gruffly if a doctor had never looked at her before, and she said, no. Never!—which was the truth.

And after she had almost died of mortification he stood up and grunted and went into the bathroom without saying a word. Then he came back and stood over her, wiping his glasses, and told her plumb out that she was at least three months pregnant, maybe four. Had she never felt life?

Life! What did he mean, life! For she refused to understand him.

While she lay there, stunned, he kept going "huh" at his glasses and wiping them and mumbling as if nothing in the world had happened.

How? When? Why hadn't she— How did he know she was pregnant? He explained it to her. For a long time after he left her she lay there on her bed, trying to think,

trying to realize what this meant to her; trying to reason down her consternation. She had a living being within her!

Deep within her own body that life-force was at work of which she herself was a part—now, this instant—forming, forming—what? A boy? A girl? A human being, like John, and her father, and his father. A link in an endless chain. She was forging that. She, Evelyn Grainger—or Ferris. Ferris! He had nothing to do with it—certainly precious little! When in the world had this happened? How? He would be dumbfounded when she told him. This life within her, this being that was now, this minute, growing, taking shape within her was hers!

For an instant she thought she could feel something stirring. Nothing. Nothing yet. Soon she would feel it. She would grow bigger, and heavier—ugly! She would have to stay indoors. Now she must take care of herself! Now she had another to think of. Every hour, day and night, for months and months. Forever! She would be a mother! Jane. She would call her Jane—if it was a girl. She prayed to a God become suddenly intimate that he would make her baby a girl.

Katie stood in the doorway and asked if she could do anything. Should she tell Katie? Katie loved her. Katie was a woman. She had had two children— Not yet! She mustn't talk about it, yet. People didn't talk about it until—

"Katie! Come here!" She was surprised at the queer sound of her own voice. She sat up on the edge of the bed and stared at her cook. "I'm going to have a baby!"

"God bless yer darlin' soul!" and Katie bent down to her and embraced her.

And suddenly Evelyn felt pride and happiness and courage flowing in to fill the gap left by her departing terror.

"Katie! Don't tell a soul." She was crying and laughing at once. "Do you hear?"

"Never a scut of it!"

"It will make him awfully happy, won't it?"

It did. And when she saw him start, saw his face go pale, and flush, saw his lips tremble, and his hands grip the marble

edge of the wash-basin—for she had told him just as he was about to wash up for dinner—then her casual tone suddenly faltered and died away and she felt a great lump in her throat and found herself crying in his arms and heard his half-crooning, broken words of endearment come as if struggling up through an emotion too profound to be expressed.

Later she admitted to herself that he did have something to do with it.

As the weeks passed, rich, now, in content and planning, the dismay which at first filled her at what lay ahead grew less and less and her wonder increased. With an intensity and completeness of absorption unknowable to a male her whole mind and body focussed on her pregnancy. Problems which but a short time before had loomed so large seemed paltry now. When, at length, she plainly, sometimes painfully felt moving, thrusting restlessly within her that pulsing something which some day would lie in her arms a full-formed, breathing, living baby she thought that all the heavens might fall unnoticed if only she might remain undisturbed within the walls of her home until that day beyond which she could not think, or plan.

Winter settled down upon them and isolated her more thoroughly. John had immediately told the news to his sister, in spite of Evelyn's express request to keep it secret awhile. Then, of course, he had to tell Tommy. She received a long, gossipy letter from her father in which he mentioned the fact that John had written him the good news. He didn't say whether they had discussed it in the family. Mr. Ferris hoped it would be a boy. A long, lovely letter from Aunt Carrie told how her aunt had wept at the news, and contained page after page of anxious advice. Aunt Carrie knew so much about it from hearsay.

Evelyn went up and down stairs, now, with the utmost care. She never bent down but that she said to herself: Be careful! She ate only the simplest, most nourishing food. Yet her stomach acted terribly. She never tasted a drop of anything alcoholic. She had heard that that was the worst thing any

one could do. She became very solidly convinced that everything she did was having its effect on the baby within her. She had read it and heard it and everybody who had any sense could understand it. Bess told her how her aunt had once had a fright when she was in this condition from seeing a mouse crawl up the leg of the table where she was seated knitting a jacket for her coming baby. And the baby was born with the mark of a mouse on its right shoulder. And the mark was gray and had fuzz on it like a mouse's skin.

So Evelyn was very careful not to look into corners where she might see a mouse, or any other thing that could give her a shock such as Bess' aunt had had. She asked Dr. Ogilvie if such a thing was possible. He said: poppycock! But she didn't believe him. She told him that she spent as much of her time as possible, now, playing beautiful music and reading sensible books and thinking only of lovely things. And Dr. Ogilvie smiled and tapped the ends of his fingers together and said, "Uh—huh. Go ahead."

So she did. At least when John wasn't home. John laughed at her theories. He had recovered from his first shock of awe and delight at the news of her condition. If anything, he seemed more than ever absorbed in his gradually expanding business.

In February their first store would open in Philadelphia.

He was planning to be in Philadelphia in February! And February was precisely the month when their child would come! He said and did and neglected to do a thousand things that proved that he was, after all, nothing but a man. What, in heaven's name, did they know or feel, compared with a woman, about the most important thing in human life? Dr. Ogilvie said it was that. Any woman knew it without being told. There were some things about which men had a hundred times more knowledge and experience than women. But here?—Pfff!

Katie was Evelyn's safety-valve. She talked to Katie by the hour. When she and John had their first quarrel it was Katie who comforted her, who gradually brought her back to the realization that she must go on, and forget and think

only of her baby. It was over a trifle. All things originate in trifles.

It was about a necktie; a miserable black-silk-with-red-dots necktie which he wanted to wear one night when they were to play five-hundred at Tommy's. And one thing led to another. The fact is, she didn't want to go to Tommy's. She was getting terribly sick of them anyway. Particularly of Bess. She asked John what he saw so fascinating about this little simpleton. Then he began to accuse her of neglect. And all the time he was fishing around for this necktie.

She began to tell him of a few of the things she had to think about while he was away in his office without giving a thought to her, of what was happening. Then he threatened to be away more of the time if she was always going to be as cold as an icicle to him and think of nothing in God's world but that she was going to have a baby in six months or so. Where in hell was that necktie? For Christ's sake was she the first woman in the world who had ever had a baby? She choked with all the things she felt and couldn't express. Six months! And this was December! She sobbed out her protest at being alone in this horrible corner of the earth, cut off from everybody in the world who loved her. And a lot of other things.

Then he found his old necktie. He tried to make up. Said he didn't want to go to Tommy's. Didn't want to go anywhere, or do anything, but just stay there and be happy with her. But for the love of Mike why did she act like this? As if she didn't want him to come within ten feet of her. And that was a downright misstatement of fact. Could he not understand that she needed gentleness and tenderness now, and not passionate love-making? Wasn't it reasonable? Was that the only thing he could think about?

He explained that it wasn't.

On the first of February Dr. Ogilvie came once more to see that everything was in order. He found everything in most marvelous order. He'd give her maybe a month. Couldn't be sure. Said she had been built, apparently, for

this special purpose. He rubbed his hands together as if he delighted in the prospect. She smiled wanly up at him and said:

"You don't think it's so—awful, do you?"

"Awful? My dear, it's perfect!"

On Friday, a week later, John left for Philadelphia to be away three days. She said good-by to him very gloomily. John, instead of trying to comfort her a little, only demanded again why the devil she hadn't called in Doc Henderson as he had begged her fifty times to do and find out where she stood. She said she knew well enough where she stood. But who could ever tell what might happen?

And of course she was right. It was her woman's intuition that had told her that John never should have gone off and left her like this. It was that inexplicable something which always warned her of things about to happen to her.

It happened on Saturday night, or rather Sunday morning. John had left on Friday. He had left a slip of paper on the bureau with the address of his hotel on it. When it started to happen nobody had any time to think of slips of paper and no time to telegraph husbands who should be where they belong at a time like this and not off somewhere beyond the horizon tending to business. Katie thought of it. Then instantly dismissed the thought. It was no place for a man, anyway.

At first Evelyn thought it only her wretched stomach. She was sitting in the library reading notices of concerts scheduled for the coming week in the Lyceum. She could hear Katie downstairs la-la-ing "Where the river Shannon flows." Suddenly a heaving, griping pain wrung a cry of panic from her and brought Katie on the run. Katie helped her to bed. As she lay there holding Katie's hand, feeling frightened and miserable Katie said:

"I think, dearie, I'll just hop over to Dr. Ogilvie's just to—"

"Don't leave me, Katie!" she moaned.

"Y're all right, child. Don't be fidgitin'. I'll be back in a jiffy."

While Katie was gone the pain came again, and with it an overwhelming realization of her utter abandonment and desolation. Then Katie was back. And soon after her the old doctor. While he examined Evelyn he kept making a funny sound with his tongue against his teeth.

"A month? What's that about a month? What are you trying to do? Fool us?"

Only then did Evelyn realize that she was going to give birth to a baby that very night. After her first terrified questions she became silent. In silence she reached down into herself for courage and for strength. It had come! It was coming, now, upon her.

Eight hours later a wave of torment starting from the confines of the world, from the bottommost depths of being swept over her; a sudden, rending, lancinating shock of agony; an equally sudden, benumbed calm, half stupor, half relief.

It was a boy.

Then they telegraphed for John.

When he came home next day Evelyn heard him in the rear bedroom talking to the nurse before coming in to her. He talked in low tones. But Evelyn had abnormally sensitive ears. He was completely flustered. He was asking how in the name of God the doctor could have made such a mistake.

Mistake! Oh, stupid man! What difference did it make?

They named him Allen, after John's father. And old man Ferris with his gnarled old shaking hand wrote in the old family Bible, opposite a bracket that joined the names of John Ferris and Evelyn Grainger, "Allen G., born February 1st, 1888." Then he looked over his bank-book.

Four weeks later Evelyn sank into a chair by the side of her bed feeling as if her feet didn't belong to her. But Katie and the nurse had each an arm around her. A blizzard was howling outside the windows, burying the park in a whirling vortex of snow. But within her bedroom it was warm and comfy and for Evelyn the blizzard of '88 was non-existent. She could not see or think farther than just beyond the farther edge of her bed where Allen Grainger Ferris lay asleep beneath a blue, woolen coverlet.

8

Evelyn took the matter seriously to the point of absurdity. Her baby, now, displaced her husband who had displaced her boy-lover who had displaced her girl-lover who had displaced her father who had displaced her Aunt Carrie who had displaced her Grandmother Sheldon who had been the first in terms of whom Evelyn had puzzled over the eternal problem of what to do. For she had not yet learned to stand alone.

John suspected the trained nurse beneath all this chronology and fuss. Having her was one of Ogilvie's ideas. What Evelyn needed was a young girl, a regular nurse-girl, like everybody else had. And no sooner had John put out a feeler, as it were, in this direction than Evelyn snapped it up. John hadn't heard the discussion before he came home that night about Allen's rash, nor overheard the nurse muttering something about Evelyn's absurd ideas out in the hall. A couple of nights later Evelyn introduced him to Anna Menosky, the daughter of one of Katie's best friends, eighteen years old, red-cheeked and awkward, who talked a kind of English in a pleasant sort of guttural and who was evidently used to hard knocks.

Then John discovered that the change in Allen's caretakers had made things even more chronological and less profitable than before. This making oneself a slave—hell! If every woman were like that—John knew perfectly well that all women were not like that. Bess Dixon, for example. He would protest, rather weakly, that Evelyn ought to take time out for amusement; for exercise, if nothing else.

Amusement! Exercise! She needed exercise!

Whenever he made any mild suggestion such as going off together for a week-end, or for a ride in the launch which rode, now, idly at anchor, week after week, down in Gravesend Bay, she would say very sweetly:

"I'm perfectly contented. If you wish—"

"Contented!" He caught himself and stared at her, gloomily. She had almost wholly recovered her girlish figure. Almost. With a difference difficult to distinguish beneath her

pretty house costume, except that her breasts no longer were tight little semi-spheres like apples half-buried in snow. It was because she insisted on suckling Allen in the old-fashioned way. His look softened. She was very beautiful. Her paleness accentuated the beauty of her eyes and her hair. Her face had lost something and gained much. On it lay the unmistakable, indefinable stamp of motherhood. "You're wrong," he finished lamely. "It isn't right for you to bury yourself like this."

It wasn't only the baby. There were a lot of other things involved in it. He couldn't exactly put his finger on them.

Evelyn thought she understood it; thought she knew, at last, why she was there where she was, doing what she was doing from day to day, from hour to hour. She watched her baby's development with jealous intensity and never-failing wonder, and felt the pride of motherhood. Nor did she realize until long, long afterwards that all her pride and eagerness cloaked a selfishness of which her husband was plainly enough aware, but which he was unable to explain, with which he was unable to cope.

She read almost nothing, now, except everybody's theories about the upbringing of children. Curiously enough she put very little of it into practice. She was satisfying an emotional curiosity, not taking a course of self-education. There were periods of weeks at a time when she never sat down at her piano. She had never felt so purposeful, so sure of herself, so satisfied that she was doing her proper work in the world.

When Allen completed his first twelvemonth they had a little party to celebrate it. Mr. Grainger came all the way down from Stamford and stayed overnight with them. He looked wonderful. They joked about his increasing youth. The Dixons were there; also Doctor Henderson with his wife. Doctor Henderson was almost as tall as John, but weighed forty pounds less. He had black hair like John, and kindly brown eyes that had a merry twinkle in them when he talked to Evelyn. She discovered that he loved music. His wife was a nondescript, draggy little blonde, rather pretty, four or

five years older than Evelyn. She had a high-pitched voice which suggested an equally high-pitched temper. A dozen other people were there. Two managers of Ferris shoe-stores. John's lawyer, Mr. Johnson; all people whom John wished her to meet for various reasons.

During the evening she played for them the second and third movements of the Grieg Concerto. She knew she played poorly. The rest didn't seem to notice it. Then she sang two or three songs. Mr. Johnson insisted on turning the music for her and kept mumbling "beautiful," when the others were clapping.

Mr. Johnson insisted on helping her with the sandwiches out in the kitchen while Tommy and John were mixing a punch in the pantry. Evelyn could see that Katie didn't like the man. Neither did she. But she laughed and joked with him a good deal on account of John. She felt very matronly, hostess in her lovely home—and very safe.

Katie went out with the tray of sandwiches, leaving them alone. Suddenly, as Evelyn was bending over the table to arrange little iced cakes on a plate she felt the touch of this man's lips very low down on the back of her neck. For she was wearing a simple little evening-gown which left that part of her exposed. She straightened up as if a bee had stung her. She could feel all the blood in her body up in her face.

"You forget yourself!" She tried to keep her voice low so that John wouldn't overhear her.

The lawyer stood there, grinning nervously, and mumbled: "Your beauty has intoxicated me."

A stupid remark! She stared at him half in anger, half in curiosity. He looked so idiotic. It was the second time in her life that a man had forgotten himself, had presumed—

"Well, you'd better get sober."

That was all. Then Katie came back. A stupid impertinence!

Long after they had all gone and John had fallen asleep she could feel the burn of that kiss low below the nape of her neck. She felt the indignity of it. She felt it now more keenly than in that first moment out in the kitchen. It tor-

tured her. She felt the stimulation of Tommy's punch. She remembered how silly Bess had acted. Had John ever tried to—

She turned over with sudden violence to the far edge of the bed, disgusted at the drift of her thoughts. Men! John's slow, stertorous breathing enraged her. She kicked his leg. Then she wished she hadn't. She lay as still as a mouse. But John only turned over, half-unconscious, clacked in his throat in that queer, ugly way and went on as before. He always slept like that after—after being sweet with her, as he called it. She was used to it. Ordinarily, it didn't bother her. Only when she lay wide-awake like this with garbled thoughts whirring through her head and a wild hunger for—something; for love, a fabled island in a non-existent sea, beauty and sunshine and a losing of oneself in a timeless embrace.

She was certain John had kissed Bess Dixon—more than once. A hundred times she had forced back this thought because her pride wouldn't let the thought come through. Now it came. It wasn't jealousy which this thought caused her. Unless jealousy was a kind of nausea.

It wasn't a snore. If it were a snore it would drive her frantic. It was just—breathing. Breathing like some great big— How could Edith stand Frank Marshall's snore? John said that the Marshalls were getting rich. Frank was vice-president now of the Mid-Continent Loan and Trust Company. She had played miserably. She would ask the Hendersons to dinner. And talk music. Had Katie noticed anything? Oh Lord, what started one flittering around like this with sleep over the hills in the next county?

That summer she spent two weeks on a visit to her old home in Stamford while John was arranging a big leather-deal in St. Louis. One day Evelyn walked past the old piano-factory and saw men unloading great bundles of leather from a truck backed up to its door. The building looked terribly dilapidated. There was a streak of white over the door where once had stood "Jepson Grainger and Sons." It gave Evelyn a shock. She determined to ask John to fix up the building just for the sake—of—of—what?

In September she met John in New York on his return from the West. In October she knew she was pregnant again.

She was not frightened this time. She had learned a great deal in the two years that had intervened since Dr. Ogilvie's first visit to her. She was not so easily shocked now. She accepted the news with a little catch of breath. She had been suspecting it for three or four days. She was in for it again.

John did not pale when she told him this time and grip the edge of anything. He cried out in great good-humor:

"You're kiddin' me!"

"It's true."

"Well, I'll be damned!"

Then he kissed her. And then she cried a little.

Again she ranged her life about her pregnancy. But this time she traveled a once-trodden path. Caring for Allen prevented a repetition of her previous intense preoccupation with what was happening from day to day within her.

Now when one is very much alone and has one's day-to-day affairs in rather exceptionally good order and is not too much preoccupied one has a chance at least to do a lot of thinking. So it was with Evelyn. Not that her thinking was particularly profound, or that it led anywhere. She began to detect a certain logic that underlay the isolated facts of life. Not very clearly as yet. For Evelyn's environment had not been such as forces maturity.

John was right. She was still a child. But John was not keeping tabs on her development. One reason was that he was entirely too deeply sunk in his own affairs. Another was that Evelyn was quite unconsciously building around herself a web, at first all but undetectible, as tenuous and fragile as gossamer which from day to day acquired toughness of texture, beyond which John never tried to penetrate until it had become for him, in spite of all his strength, impassable.

He was by no means unaware of this process. He saw no way of stopping it, as indeed there was none. Principally for business reasons he joined the Shinnecock Club which had its rooms a few blocks from their home. Later in the winter

he became a charter member of the Long Island Driving Club.

Evelyn talked a great deal with Dr. Ogilvie who had grown very fond of her and liked to drop in on his afternoon round of calls and chat with his little patient about children and motherhood and things in general. She read, now, in a jumbled, desultory way from books in John's library. She found that John had not read all his books. She would ask him to explain things about which she was terribly ignorant; about science and history. But his explanations were never very lucid. He preferred to play with baby Allen who adored his father and who never wanted to go to sleep until John would carry him up to the nursery and play hunter with him. Then Evelyn, hearing Allen's shrieks, would call up the stair and scold John for getting the child so excited that sleep was impossible.

It was Dr. Ogilvie who suggested her sleeping apart from John because of her condition and because she suffered so from sleeplessness. For she was very much bigger this time than when she had carried Allen, and correspondingly more irritable. When she told John he only shrugged his shoulders.

"Do as you think best," he said.

"It isn't that," she said. "It's what—" Something in his tone, a fleeting expression in his eyes as he looked down at Allen whom he was swinging on his foot, made Evelyn add gently: "It's only for three or four months, dear."

"It's all right," said John and jiggled Allen up and down. "I understand."

But she knew he didn't.

On the sixth of June her baby came. It was a girl. She named her Jane. And so another of her girlhood dreams came true.

That summer, after she was again able to go about and resume her quiet routine, she rode with John and Allen in the park while Anna, the maid, stayed at home with Jane. Or she sat upstairs in the nursery and wrote letters home while the two children were sleeping, one on either side of her. And summer flamed into autumn, and autumn faded into winter,

and winter softened into spring and swelled again to summer while John and Evelyn in their home across the avenue from the ever-changeful, yet static park slipped by subtle changes into a similar rhythmic vegetation and confused a slow accumulation of habits with the restless, rending power that is life.

Their disagreements were never violent, never bitter. As a rule, they were about the children, or the household routine. They rarely discussed anything else. Evelyn had not the faintest idea of all that was going on behind the slowly deepening silence and moroseness of her husband.

He came home late one night from the Shinnecock Club. It was not especially late. Perhaps an hour later than usual. Evelyn had never begrudged her husband this means of diversion. The previous six months had been a period of strain. A countrywide financial crisis had involved the Ferris chain-stores in the general panic. There was a time in the early winter when John hadn't come home at all for days at a time. Evelyn knew that Frank Marshall had helped; that old Mr. Ferris had come to John's rescue at a desperate moment.

She thought she understood the source of her husband's irritation. When he had gloomily talked about failure she had eagerly assured him that it would mean nothing whatever to her. What difference whether they were rich or poor? They had the children. John could always support them. He mustn't worry. He would pull through.

He did. The worst was over. They would have to economize a little. Their plan for building a new home on their grounds opposite the park would have to be postponed. But the Ferris chain-stores were still a chain. A few links had been removed. And John had lost weight—which was a good thing. She would spend the coming summer in Stamford with the children and save hotel-expense.

John never came home intoxicated. Sometimes just a bit happy, as he called it. On this particular night she heard him switch on the light in their front bedroom and then come on through to where she lay in a sort of half-sleep. When he

bent over her to kiss her she smelled that sweetish, nauseating odor of beer. Because he had roused her quite unnecessarily she exclaimed, petulantly:

"Go away! You're disgusting! I was asleep!"

He stood over her bed and grinned down at her. His smile was anything but pleasant. So she only rolled over and closed her eyes and pretended to be asleep again. She was angry at his lack of consideration. Why did he have to wake her up so that she would lie, now, perhaps, half the night and—

"What time is it?" she murmured with her eyes still closed.

"What the hell difference does it make?"

It was the queer tone that startled her, not the expletive.

"What do you mean, what difference does it make?" she asked indignantly.

"Nothing," he said. So she let it go at that. She could tell the humor he was in. It was nothing new. There was a moment's silence. "Why are you sleeping in here?"

He knew perfectly well why she was there. She always slept in the rear bedroom when he went out evenings so that he wouldn't have to wake her when he came. It was on account of her insomnia which persisted and which Dr. Ogilvie said was not a matter to be laughed at. Dr. Ogilvie had said that it would be better for her if she slept alone altogether. When she had only mentioned this to John it had precipitated a quarrel. He completely misunderstood her. She was angry now. He was selfish and unreasonable. She looked up at him.

"You know perfectly well why I am, at least, trying to sleep here."

He was still grinning at her.

"I know," he said. He put his hand on her hair. "I feel lonesome. Come on and talk to me."

For a moment she lay still. Then she took a deep breath and sat up.

"Why do you sigh like that? Is it such a disagreeable prospect?"

"I haven't said anything about its being disagreeable. I'm sleepy, that's all. You forget—"

"Forgive me!" he said impulsively and put his arm about her to kiss her. He smelt vile—stale tobacco, beer. She turned her face away. He stood up suddenly. As he did so he pushed her violently so that she half toppled over in bed. "Go to hell!" he growled, and stalked back into the front bedroom and pulled the door to between them.

For a long time she lay there, perfectly motionless, staring up into the dark. Vaguely she heard indistinct noises in the adjoining room. Then she heard John get into bed. Then silence. A crack of light remained beneath the closed door. Therefore she knew that he was lying there, awake. Just as she.

"Go to hell!" He could tell her that after six years of life together! Six years. Until her life wound along from day to day in a closed circle that led nowhere and contained nothing but an endless series of tasks that no one cared about, or thought about except herself. And now he told her to go to hell!

What was it all for? What relation to all she had hoped for?

The rattle of the opening door startled her. She closed her eyes. Her muscles stiffened. He was standing beside her.

"Are you asleep?" She didn't answer him. "I want to talk with you." He switched on the light. She turned away her face because of the sudden glare. She heard him sneer. "I want you to talk with me." There was a note in his quiet tone that she had never heard before. "Yes." She swallowed. "What do you want me to do?"

He sat on the edge of the bed.

"I don't want you to do anything. I want to tell you what's on my mind. And I want you to understand, Eve, that it's been on my mind for—for a hell of a long time."

Her eyes flickered beneath his gloomy stare.

"I don't think it's quite necessary for you to keep on—"

"It is necessary!"

"I mean—"

"It doesn't matter what you mean."

So she kept still.

"If you give a tinker's dam about my love for you, Eve, it's time you realized that there isn't a man on earth that can stand this kind of thing indefinitely. You're torturing the soul out of me. I've gotten so I don't give a god-damn what happens to me, or you, or anything, or anybody—"

"John! You don't need—"

"I do! I'm talking to you!" He rose and began pacing up and down before her bed. "Have I been unreasonable? Have I asked—ask! I've been a jackass! Your whole life you've had things handed to you, had things your own way until you think the world revolves around you. And what are you? You know nothing. You know as much about life as your baby. You're just about as responsible. It's my own fault. I've been like all the rest. I saw only the surface of you. I didn't see that kernel in you that's the real you, so hard that the devil himself couldn't crack it. It's taken me six years to recognize that. For six years I've hoped you would learn, hoped you would change, always made excuses for you, tried to go on, and forget and you get worse and worse and more and more sunk in yourself and what the hell do you think a man is made of? When I married you I thought I was marrying a woman not a—not a— You're not a woman. You're an iceberg. On the surface you're very lovely, very harmless and you're mostly surface. But underneath you're a god-damned, cold-blooded, selfish, little bitch! That's what you are.—You can think it over."

He slammed out of the room and again pulled shut the door before she could have replied had she been able to speak.

9

Three months later Evelyn sat thinking it over. Terns wheeled over a gray-green sea before her, scolding raucously, darting suddenly up and dropping like flashes of light to pierce its quiet surface and emerge again with shining bits of silver in their beaks. From a dense growth of bayberry and briar below the cliff on which she sat came the multitudinous sounds of wild-life in the full flood of spring. Far out in front of

her the indistinct outlines of a coast veiled in bluish haze. Away over there, somewhere, lay Stamford, behind the haze, invisible. Equally distant, equally hidden behind heavy mist lay her girlhood, lay her plans, her day-dreams, her mistaken notions of things.

Her boy, Allen, scooped spoonsful of damp sand from a tiny pail on the floor beside her and gravely ranged them in piles that were sugar-cookies along the bench on which she sat. As he did so he carried on a busy conversation with an imagined playmate. She could see her maid, Anna, playing with Jane on the pebbles of the beach far below her.

She was still trying to reason things out. But, even here, something was always interfering with the process. Now it was the terns. Unconsciously she began counting them, began making mental wagers as to which one would first catch a fish.

She had read the advertisement of the Rocky Point House in the Brooklyn Eagle, had remembered the night she had spent there five years before. A mental picture of this rugged cliff, a memory of its isolation had roused in her a sudden longing to be there away from everything and everybody. Three days later John had brought them, bag and baggage.

A dilapidated-looking fellow in torn gray shirt and brown overalls had come out to their carriage. It was Carrington Billard—no longer a boy. Very grouchy. The hotel was not yet open for guests. Painters there; everything upset, getting ready for the summer. His mother down with the grippe. He couldn't give any one any attention.

Who owned that cute little cottage over there in the grove on the bluff? It was for rent for the summer. People who took it ate at the hotel.

Well!

They had gone over to it. A porch, a living-room, a maid's room; two bedrooms up an open stair, a fireplace; a piano—horribly out of tune. The grouchy young proprietor had left them there to go see if there was anything in the Rocky Point kitchen in the way of supper for his insistent guests.

Then Evelyn had said:

"I'm going to stay here."

And John had shrugged his shoulders.

"Do as you please. Thank God I don't have to."

He had spent one night with them. Next day he had gone back to their home opposite the park, to Katie and to his work. She had let him kiss her good-by. He had said he would spend week-ends with her when possible. She had made no comment. She knew it wouldn't be often. That's why she had come to this jumping-off place.

So she was there. She would have told any one that she was very blue, very miserable.

She had not packed a suitcase on that night three months before and left the house and taken her two babies with her and fled to Stamford. She had not gone to a hotel. She had not gone to Chicago, and Edith; nor to Atlantic City, and Edna. She had not gone anywhere. She had gone on living in the same house with him; sleeping, however, in the rear bedroom—and very, very fitfully. She had not again been disturbed. Her first, fierce protest had quieted to a grumbling ache.

Gradually she had learned how to talk with him. Not fluently. That was the trouble. She could not clearly explain herself. In the first place she had never learned how, had always acted first and thought about it afterwards. In the second place her awe of John precluded frankness. In the third place he never gave her the opportunity to talk. She was always listening to him.

The more he reasoned with her, the more convinced she became that he completely misunderstood her. As her conviction increased her awe of him diminished. What had become of her girlhood, her plans, her music, her ambition to—Aunt Carrie was right! Years ago, when she was still a girl, Aunt Carrie had told her that love to a woman meant give, but love to a man meant take. She caught at this diaphanous catch-phrase just as one of the terns before her seized a fish.

No one at Rocky Point with whom to discuss this thesis. No one except this Billard man who worked all day in sweat and dirt with teams of horses and a gang of brigands. Or old Mrs. Billard who was still ailing and went to bed at sun-

set. Therefore no one to challenge her conclusion. Only the terns scolded raucously and Allen chattered on with his imagined playmate. She had her children to live for. The years would go on and she would grow older. Her children would grow older and fill, more and more, the emptiness of her life. She would take up her music. For six years she had neglected— She would write her father—

"Ah, there you are!"

She frowned at the interruption. Mr. Billard stood in the entrance of the little lookout and grinned down at her. He was bareheaded, his shirt and trousers powdered with rockdust, his brown arms stained with earth and sweat.

"Good-morning," she said and smiled up at him.

"I found this at the post-office for you." He handed her a letter. In the corner was printed: "The Ferris Chain Shoe-Stores." She laid it on the bench beside her. "I waited for you for an hour. I so hoped you would come."

"For me?"

"Oh well. Last night you said you might go with me to the village this morning."

"I completely forgot it. I'm sorry."

"I want to go, mama!"

He stood there, awkwardly, evidently unwilling to go and not knowing how to stay. Allen pulled him over to look at the display of cakes on the bench. He smelled of the earth. She saw the cords of his neck stand out as he bent over to talk to Allen. It pleased her that he took an interest in the child. Allen was forever talking about Mr. Billard, coaxing for permission to go play with Mr. Billard. She smiled as she watched them.

At night, after supper, Mr. Billard usually walked back with them to her cottage on the bluff and talked with her while Anna put the children to bed. She would ask him if he were not dead with fatigue after his day of violent work. And he would grin and shrug his shoulders. Tired? Why tired? However, he always left early because he had to be up at five o'clock. She had confessed that before she came down there it had frequently been five o'clock before she could sleep, at

all. Because of her insomnia. Insomnia? She? He had looked at her. There was no mistaking his expression. She had smiled. Yes. Very foolish, but true. She had suffered dreadfully from insomnia.

She enjoyed talking with him—in a way. He was still nothing but a boy. He took pains, now, to be clean and neat at supper-time. An attractive face; brown, and lean. He had been three years at Stevens Institute. He was taking this year out to earn money with which to complete his engineering-course.

Evelyn was looking down at Anna and Jane seated on the pebbles on the beach below. These days were heaven for Anna Menosky. She sat down there by the hour with Jane and added to the private store of linen that she was embroidering against the possibility of finding some one, some day, who might want to marry her. Evelyn glanced up to see Mr. Billard staring at her.

"Do you remember," said Mr. Billard, "the first time I saw you here? You sat exactly where you are sitting now. And smiled—exactly like that. I never have forgotten that—that night. It was sunset."

"Yes?"

"You came as a sort of— You were the first really beautiful woman I had ever seen."

She laughed.

"You have too much imagination."

"I couldn't get you out of my head for—in fact, I never have. Now you are here again. Isn't it funny how things work out?"

"I—it's—not especially remarkable, is it?" He had grabbed up Allen and was tossing him up and down. A silly tune which she sometimes whistled popped into her head from she knew not where. It had the rhythm of his swinging arms.

"This little rascal hadn't happened then." The memory of that night of misery which she had spent here nearly five years before came back to her. That night it was when, if she had not been such an ignoramus, she would have known—

"It seems only yesterday," he was saying.

"Yesterday!" She made a wry face.

"You don't look a day older—only more beautiful."

"I pulled two gray hairs from my head this morning."

"Ridiculous!"

"It isn't ridiculous. It's tragic!"

"Do it again! Do it again!" clamored Allen, embracing Mr. Billard's knees.

"Don't pester Mr. Billard, dearie. I'm afraid you've spoiled him."

"He's a dear!" cried Mr. Billard with great enthusiasm, and bounced the heir to the Ferris Chain Shoe-Stores toward the ceiling of the lookout. Again the silly tune. She whistled a few bars of it. He started singing "She's my Annie—I'm her Joe!"

Evelyn burst into laughter.

"That's too funny."

"What?"

"Oh, I have this silly habit of associating tunes with people. I don't know why."

" 'So I'm Annie Rooney.' "

"Yes. You're Annie Rooney."

They sat on the bench of the lookout and talked of coincidences. John's letter lay between them. Allen kept tumbling over Mr. Billard's lap. Then Mr. Billard coaxed Evelyn to bring Allen to where the men were at work so that Allen could watch the horses. They went and sat together on a rock while Mr. Billard explained how they were blasting boulders from this place and grading it for two tennis-courts. Evelyn said her husband loved to play tennis. Mr. Billard exclaimed that he and Mr. Ferris would have no end of fun together when he came for his week-end visits. Did Mr. Ferris like to fish?

"Oh yes!" And Mr. Ferris could swim wonderfully. Allen teased to go fishing in a boat with Mr. Billard.

Wonderful fishing on the reef off the lighthouse. Would she try it sometime with him? Allen became clamorous.

"Of course you can go, dearie—if mother goes."

And Mr. Billard jumped up in delight.

"We shall go to-morrow!"

Again Allen became vociferous.

"Excuse me, will you?" laughed Mr. Billard. "I must pretend to work a little at least, otherwise these fellows—" He hurried over to the laborers.

During one of these intermissions Evelyn read John's letter. She read with a bitter taste in her mouth. Nothing in it. He had been to Philadelphia; would go to Stamford this coming Saturday to see dad who was ailing again. If there was anything she wanted him to do there, or any message, she could write. He would like to hear about the kids. He'd try to get down week after next. Did she want him to bring anything?

In the afternoon, after the children's nap, they all rode with Mr. Billard to the village. And Evelyn whose teeth were being rattled out pretended to like it because of Allen's delight. While Mr. Billard was having his team shod at the blacksmith shop Evelyn walked with the children and Anna Menosky along the elm-shaded street of the village and purchased little odds and ends. A ball for Allen, some post-cards, thread, a tube of tooth-paste. In the drug-store they sat perched on stools before a marble counter and sucked chocolate ice-cream sodas through straws. The man allowed Allen to turn the nickel spigot whence water gushed into a glass.

They drove back along a back country lane through fields yellow-green with springing wheat, or freshly plowed, brown and steaming in the sun, past apple-trees in blossom. They came to woods that skirted the shore of the Sound. Constantly they had to bend down to avoid low, interlocking branches. The children shouted in glee. Anna Menosky squeaked and scolded incessantly. Mr. Billard stopped the team and helped Allen to stand on the seat.

"See! That's where we're going soon!" He pointed through the green arch ahead of them. There was a joyousness in his tone, an eager, infectious note. Before them glistened the dunes.

"Not now, Allen dear. Sometime. Not to-day." And

Evelyn smiled up at Mr. Billard. "You see how deeply you're getting yourself in?"

After supper, it being still a half-hour before sunset, Mr. Billard took them all to the lighthouse in order to see the world from the top of the tower and to watch the keeper make ready the great, prismed lantern for the night. Amid laughter and exclamations of fear they climbed the winding, triangular steps of the tower and stood upon the top platform, beneath its great dome. Evelyn held Mr. Billard's arm and gazed out over a dizzying vista of sea and rock-strewn beach, and cliffs, and forest, and smiling fields bathed in the light of the setting sun.

"How wonderful!" she breathed. "How perfectly—glorious!"

The keeper of the light was explaining to the awe-struck Allen the mechanism of the huge torch. For once Allen was quiet. Timidly he touched the iridescent edges of the great prisms. With the other hand he clung to his mother's skirt.

When they were all down once more in the little living-room of the lighthouse the white-haired wife of the keeper chatted with them eagerly. She was hungry for talk. She said that for months at a time in the winter she never talked to a living soul except her husband.

"It's awful," she said. "So lonesome!"

Evelyn squeezed the old lady's hand sympathetically.

"You're so pretty," said the keeper's wife, fondling her hand. "You don't mean to tell me you're the mother of these two children?"

"Of course I am," laughed Evelyn, flushing.

"Well, I declare!" said the old lady. "You're nothing but a girl, yourself!"

Later, Evelyn sat talking with Mr. Billard on the steps of the porch of her cottage. They could hear the children's chatter from the bedroom above them where Anna was undressing them for bed. The evening twilight enveloped them. A faint glow still lingered in the west. There was a perfume of growing things in the heavy air. Evelyn drew a long breath and concealed a little yawn.

"You will sleep well to-night," smiled Mr. Billard.

"Oh—yes. I sleep, now, really—amazingly."

"It's the air—the quiet—"

"It's perfectly lovely here."

"I'm awfully glad," he said with quite unnecessary gravity. "I want—I do hope you'll be awfully happy here—contented, I mean."

"I am. Really. I haven't felt like this in—in ages."

"It's so different from what you're accustomed to—so primitive—"

"I love it."

"Do you really? I'm afraid, always, that—"

"But I love it. Everything. Just because it is so simple—and so—I'm a very simple person."

"You're—" he exclaimed, stopped, and swallowed. He was staring out ecstatically into the dark where fireflies were dancing under the locust-trees.

She glanced up at the open window of the bedroom where Anna was shrilly scolding Allen. She rose with a little laugh in which was a musical note.

At that moment she was not thinking of Carrington Billard as an individual. She would have been quite unable to define her opinion of him save that he was a congenial person to talk to, save that his boyishness, his nervous slimness, his frank adoration of her were indefinably pleasant.

He looked up at her. In his eyes lay passionate pleading. She saw it very distinctly. She smiled down at him. In her tone lay her involuntary answer. But her words were:

"Excuse me, please, a minute. I think I am needed up there."

She had not consciously reversed the facts, yet she knew perfectly well that her children did not need her at that moment. As she went inside and up the stair the direction of her drift was for a moment clear to her. All her dormant capability for passion was stirring into life. All her thirst for comradeship, her instinctive revolt against the monotony, misunderstandings, repressions, of her life, were glowing into a threat of flame. She felt this as a vague uneasiness, an un-

defined and causeless wish to hurry, as though precious time was being lost. Yet she knew she had nothing whatever to do. She stayed much longer than necessary with her children. All the while she wondered if he was still waiting there on the steps of the porch gazing out at the fireflies, waiting for her to come down. Her instinctive resistance to her desire to go made her read a bedtime story to the children and fondle them and fuss over them before she kissed them good-night. Then she went down again into the warm gloom of the porch.

He was still sitting there, a black shadow against a pillar by the steps. Out under the locust-trees the dance of the fireflies had become an Eleusinian mystery to the mad music of the spring night.

"I'm afraid I'm not a very polite hostess. Have I been gone a long time?"

"A moment ago it seemed a hundred years. Now it seems only a minute."

She laughed and sat on the step beside him.

"Thank you. They are such dears. I hate to leave them."

"Perfectly wonderful children."

"I'm very proud of them."

"You ought to be!"

"Shall we go inside? Perhaps it would be—"

"Oh no! Please! It's so much pleasanter here—unless you are chilly—"

"I'll get my shawl."

He leaped up.

"Let me—"

"No," she said, hastily and put her hand on his arm. "Sit still. I know just where it is."

Again she kept him waiting.

He assisted her to sit down. She felt the warm pressure of his hand on hers. He bent over as they sat and very reverently kissed it. She drew it away.

"You must be—very—sensible," she said in a low tone.

"Forgive me! I will try—awfully hard."

They talked on—aimlessly. An impetuous lover would have frightened her. It was his diffidence, his youthful awk-

wardness that roused her, his very inexperience that permitted her to enjoy the emotion which he neither knew how nor dared to express. It was her sense of dominance.

"Anna sleeps upstairs," she said, in answer to his questions. "In the children's room."

She listened to his stories of boyish adventure in college, to his plan for work in the world. She felt old beside him. In another sense she felt younger than in years—a girl once more, as if she were back in Rosemary Hall, as if all that had intervened had never been. She would like—she wasn't sure what she would like. So many things between them of which this boy knew nothing. Yet with astonishing perspicacity he had detected her profound unhappiness, the concealed tragedy of her life. She felt the rising pressure behind his low, eager tones and pretended to be in total ignorance of it.

At length she rose.

"I'm afraid it's very late," she said.

He had also risen. She could barely see his features although he was standing very close before her.

"Have I bored you to death?"

"Not at all," she said. "But you must sleep. I know how hard you have to work."

"My God! Sleep!" he mumbled. He reached out for her hand.

"Good-night," she said, allowing her hand to rest in his hot, trembling clasp—and answering it just a little.

"Good-night." There was an instant's silence. "Oh—Please!" he murmured and suddenly threw his arms about her and strained her to him and kissed her wildly, with tight-shut lips that hurt her own. She turned her face aside and pushed him away from her.

"Don't!" she whispered. "Let me—"

His arms dropped humbly. He shook his head violently.

"I'm insane!"

"Go, now."

"I—I adore you!"

"Go!"

She gave him a little push and hurried into the house.

10

On the following evening she sat alone with him on the steps of her cottage and leaned back against a pillar of the porch and watched the fireflies at their mad revel in the gloom of the locust-grove. She breathed in the perfume of its blossoms that were shadows, hearing not so much the words as the low, eager tones of this youth who sat close beside her and poured out to her the world-old plea of a boy in love for the inalienable rights of the individual to perfect happiness.

As she listened she could hear, also, the voice of Anna Menosky who sat above them by an open screened-in window reading a bedtime story to her children.

Very pleasant this idle drift, forgetful, not thinking, not willing, not resisting, an insistent hunger within her for a yet untasted something that life owed her, lying ill-concealed, very close, beneath the diffidence of this boy's half-articulate passion.

She let his hand stray over her breasts and shoulders and neck and hair, and thrilled beneath its timid touch.

"If you could only know how beautiful you are!"

"I'm not beautiful," she said, taking his too-errant hand in hers. "I only wish—"

"You are; you are!" he mumbled, stupidly.

Very late she sent him home. His kisses had roused her to a high pitch of nervousness. With increasing difficulty she had "made him behave." She had no pity on his helpless passion lashed to a fever by a resistance which in his ignorance he dared not brush aside. She was all but as ignorant as he, despite her years of motherhood and marriage. What little she knew was precisely that which lay at the root of her resistance. Her experience had but reënforced her distorted, puritanic conception of the essential ugliness of sex, had but rooted more firmly an inculcated horror of the original sin. Not easily were these repressions overcome, nor suddenly. He could not know that his diffidence was his greatest asset in his struggle with this foolish little woman who had come to him within the aura of a divinity.

On this night it was she who lay awake a long, long time after he had given her a last good-night kiss and rushed out into the darkness. But she felt her own passion only as an unaccountable infatuation; felt it only as a strangely pleasant restlessness, an inability to keep her mind from wandering off into idle speculations, vaguely pleasurable.

On the following afternoon she walked with him and Allen through the woods to the west along a winding path carpeted thickly with oak-leaves. As Allen scurried on ahead kicking the dead leaves about, Carrington pressed her arm which he held in his on the pretext of its being necessary and fondled her hand and gave it a sudden, stolen kiss.

He had been up at daybreak. Had worked violently all morning that he might have the afternoon free. Nevertheless, while Evelyn was eating lunch, she had heard Mrs. Billard scolding Carrington out in the kitchen and knew its cause. She had felt a delicious recklessness at the sound of the old lady's shrill discontent.

They came down among the great dunes that stretched for miles along the coast to a depth of half a mile. They toiled up miniature mountains of glistening sand and down into valleys carpeted with moss and pine-needles dropped from low-branching trees that ringed them about in delightful intimacy.

She stopped beneath the heavy, cone-tipped branches of a stunted pine and looked back at their three tracks which broke a glistening slope behind them. She opened her mouth and drew in a great breath of the warm, pine-scented air. Her face was flushed from their tramp through sun and sand. On her forehead and lips glistened tiny drops of perspiration. Her gray eyes glowed out at him from beneath the shadows of her broad-brimmed hat. She stretched up her arms as though to free them from her clinging clothes.

He stood staring at her hungrily, helplessly.

"My God, you are—exquisite!"

She gave a sudden, involuntary little shiver. And as they looked into each other's eyes she saw him sway a little and laughed and turned to Allen who was calling impatiently:

"Come-mon! What're you always stoppin' and talkin' so much for?"

"Oh!" cried Evelyn. "What English! Run! Bring that lovely flower to mother."

"A—aw—" retorted Allen, looking, but not moving in the direction his mother pointed, "where's the squirrel's nest? I thought he promised to show me a squirrel's nest?"

They returned. And Evelyn with a gayety almost boisterous threw back the top of her retuned piano, lifted both her babies to the bench beside her and sent streaming out into a drowsy world the Fifth Symphony of Liszt. Old Mrs. Billard who was hobbling with a pan of cracked corn toward her chicken-pen stopped and stood listening for a long while in silence. Then she shook her head and hobbled on. She could not have explained the reason for her gesture. There was something inexpressibly pagan about this sudden flood of music. From that moment she had her doubts about this high-falutin tenant of hers with her two children and nursemaid and her husband off goodness knew where—or why.

When her boy came down after supper, looking as if he had just crawled out of a band-box, with his hair sleeked as if the cat had licked it, Mrs. Billard arched her already extremely convex brows and said:

"Carrington; I don't like it."

"Don't like what!" exclaimed Mr. Billard indignantly.

"Never mind. I only— Don't forget that this—lady's got a husband."

"My God!" cried Mr. Billard, disgusted at this highly improper and unnecessary statement of fact. "Don't I know she's got a husband?"

Mrs. Billard shrugged her shoulders and pulled her woolen shawl more closely about them against a theoretical draft.

That evening Evelyn played for Mr. Billard who sat on the single rocking-chair of her tiny living-room, listened in ecstasy and gazed at the exquisite curve of her neck and shoulders. After she had played for him he continued to sit while she went upstairs to say good-night to the children. As he sat he painted fantastic pictures of passionate adventure

until he could sit no longer, but wandered about the room fondling this and that object belonging to her, listening in rapture to the murmurous music of her voice in the room above, his nerves, like piano-wires, ready to sing at a touch. At length he heard her coming down to him. She was as nervous as he.

"You must not stay late to-night," she said and went quickly past him and sat upon a little divan in the corner of the room. He felt a sudden chill down his spine.

"I will go now if you wish me to."

"Oh no!" She saw his hurt expression. "I don't mean—Come!" She stretched out her hand to him. "Talk to me."

He knelt before her. He laid his head on her lap and clasped his hands behind her back and whispered into the folds of her skirt:

"I love you! I love you! I love you!"

For a minute she let him stay as he was, in silence, and ran her fingers through his hair. She was conscious only of a great inertia and a great content. Very gently she said:

"Please, dear, sit beside me a little while and tell me of something beautiful. And—and then you must go."

Boy-like, he understood her literally. He sat beside her and put his arm about her waist and tried to talk. And the nonsense to which she listened, with gray eyes wide open and red lips parted in a smile was transmuted by his passion and her hunger into beauty. His fondling remained inconsequential. When he loosened a snap or two of her dress where it was fastened over her shoulder and touched his trembling fingers to the swelling arch of her breast she shivered, pulled his hand down to her lap, patted it and said, "You mustn't, dear." She resnapped her dress, then let him kiss her long and passionately, realizing with a thrill of pride that was in essence sensual, her complete mastery.

When she saw how harmless he was because his reverence for her controlled his passion, she grew more reckless, more avid for his kisses, his almost purposeless groping.

They kept their voices low, unconscious of the passing time, of the lengthening silences in their quasi-conversation. But

when Evelyn heard Anna, behind the closed door of her room upstairs, pull open a rattling window she jumped up nervously, arranged her rumpled dress and hair and went over to the center-table and sat in the rocking-chair. For a few moments they sat like that and Evelyn felt a peculiar, deadening sense of disappointment creeping over her. She shifted to the piano-bench. Then Carrington also jumped up and started pacing up and down like Napoleon at Waterloo, mumbling: "My God, what's the matter with me!"

At these words, Evelyn, who knew neither what was the matter with him nor with herself, glanced up at a little wall-clock that ticked ominously over their heads and exclaimed:

"My dear! Do you realize what time it is?"

He didn't. It was, in fact, eleven o'clock—not late, as nights go, but very late for this particular night. At any rate Evelyn insisted that it was.

She did not sense the agony of his spirit, his aching helplessness. She only felt a subtle chill in the air. She only wanted him to go now and let her rest. She had had a long day—so had he. She gently reminded him of that fact.

For a reply he gave a kind of groan and came to where she sat on the piano-bench and pulled her to her feet and embraced her savagely. She pushed him away, displeased. His kisses had gone stale.

"Don't! You must go, now. I am really—very tired."

He stood before her, a picture of complete defeat, of pitiable wretchedness.

"Is that your bedroom?" he asked, nodding toward the door of the adjoining room.

"No. I sleep upstairs."

"Please!" he murmured hoarsely, staring toward the bedroom. Then turned, suddenly, and fled, closing the outer door noisily behind him.

For a long time Evelyn sat on the piano-bench staring gloomily at the green-shaded lamp on the center-table. She was not angry with him. She was only ashamed, now, of herself. In the midst of her self-accusation she felt a distinct relief. She had escaped something which in her ex-

perience and imagination was repulsive. Then in a fresh wave of shame she realized how she had thrilled beneath this boy's kisses and longed for him to go on and push aside her sham resistance and take her wholly. She shuddered. A vision of her husband in their home opposite the park—solitary, huge, with that look of bottomless misery in his eyes—her children!

She went slowly upstairs. She stood before the closed door of their room and bent her head, listening intently. She went on into her bedroom. She slowly undressed and lay between the cool sheets of her bed and heard the sibilant music of the night come through her opened window. As she lay, her conscience first drowsed off. She was playing again with one whose timid caresses at length lulled her, curled on her side, with one arm tucked about her pillow, into a dreamless sleep.

Next morning when Carrington was feverishly at work with his men, completing the grading of the new tennis-courts, he suddenly stopped and bent his head to listen. From beyond the hill, out from among the tops of the locust-grove waving in the sun, streamed a riotous flood of harmony. And Evelyn sat before her piano and felt the unused energy of years. Felt rising within her a fresh, immense ambition to do her work in the world.

All day she avoided the sight, the thought of Carrington Billard. After lunch, while the children napped, she wrote to her husband giving him messages for Aunt Carrie and Aunt Pru and her father. She would be looking for him a week from that coming Saturday. No. There was nothing whatever she wanted. She was perfectly happy there with the children. In the afternoon she sat on the beach with them and told them stories of Mr. Whale and Mrs. Porpoise and how the starfish watched a race between the shark and the little sunfish.

At supper she hurried through her meal and went directly back to her cottage with only a nodded greeting to Mrs. Billard, sitting alone on the hotel-porch. Carrington was nowhere in evidence.

She sat in her living-room after the children had gone up

to bed, decided to write letters, changed her mind. She opened a novel belonging to the hotel book shelves, then threw it aside. She could not play. It would keep the children awake. She lay down on the couch where they had sat together the evening before and wondered what he was doing. Perhaps he was offended. It was just as well. She felt very virtuous, very strong. Also very restless. She had a premonition of one of her sleepless nights. For the first time she keenly felt the monotony of this place; its lonesomeness, its isolation. She reflected that many women would be nervous, living alone like this away off at the end of the earth, with doors and windows open. She never bothered to lock her door. Carrington Billard had said it was quite unnecessary. She had no fear.

She rose with a yawn. She went into the maid's bedroom adjoining the living-room, which was unused because Anna who was a bit timid preferred sleeping upstairs in the children's room. She lighted a candle standing on the bureau. She closed the window. Just a precaution against the possibility of rain in the night. She took the candle with her, blew out the lamp of the living-room and went upstairs. She undressed. She spent a long time combing out her hair and fussing with her cold-cream and washes. She wasn't a bit sleepy. She looked at herself in the funny little mirror. Her nightdress, of the sort Aunt Pru called sinful, accentuated the matured curves of her straight, supple body. Her single heavy braid of chestnut hair fell over her shoulders. He had said that she was beautiful. Others had said it. For whom was she beautiful? For some one—somewhere. Not this boy. Her husband never looked at her—except— Somewhere was her lover, wise, and strong, and beautiful. She lay on her bed.

She saw distant stars winking through the screening of her window. The night was unseasonably warm. Perhaps it did mean rain. She had closed the bedroom-window downstairs. But two were open in the living-room. Perhaps— But why rain if the stars were shining? Next week there would be a moon. It would be wonderful, some night, to sleep on the beach under the moon. She counted sheep as they jumped

over a gate. Sleep, sleep— Please sleep in that room tomorrow. She heard a noise from the room below—a curtain flapping. She rose and went downstairs.

She stood a long time in the dark by an open window, listening—to what? Nothing. Soft, confused murmurings of night. It was cool here; it was lovely. Whisperings of the night— Please sleep in that room. She turned. The blackness of the open door to the adjoining bedrom beckoned her. She went inside.

Perhaps in fact she could sleep better in this strange bed. She wondered what time it was; fought against the impulse to get up again and look at the clock in the living-room. She could hear its solemn, slow tick-tock. No; she couldn't sleep here. She flopped over, petulantly, to lie on her stomach. As she did so she heard the front door open.

She lay with muscles stiffened as by an electric shock. Some one moved in her living-room. She was not frightened. She knew who it was; knew why she was there; waited, not breathing, for his slow, uncertain groping through the darkness to her. He was bending over her. Her face was buried in the pillow which she held tightly to her. She felt his trembling lips burning her shoulder. She shuddered. Then she turned, and reached up her bare arms.

II

An excited whispering of leaves outside her window, and through it the first gray of morning. From a single, piccolo note, caught up here and there in the grove outside swelled the shrill symphony of waking birds until the air pulsed with a wild, exultant clash of sound.

Never before, it seemed to her, had she heard the song of birds. A similar singing within her. She half rose, leaning on her elbow, and stared out into the breaking dawn. That smile lay on her lips which Raphael once caught miraculously and fixed in line and color.

She turned and bent over that tousled head which she had fondled for hours during this incredible night, gazed intently

at his face, so white-seeming in this half-light, listened to his slow, quiet breathing. A passion like the tide of the sea for this boy who had shown her after six years of marriage and motherhood what it meant to be a woman. She touched her hot, dry lips very gently to his forehead.

"It's morning, dear," she whispered. "Do you hear? It's morning. You must go."

He opened his eyes, drugged with sleep, and closed them again.

"I want to stay here," he murmured, "forever."

In imagination she heard Anna stirring about in the room above them. Any minute, now, Jane would awaken. She stroked his cheek.

"It's late, dearest. It's day. You must wake up."

He started up.

"My God! Have I been asleep?"

She smiled. This hour during which she had lain there in motionless relaxation after a night of maddening delight, this hour of perfect satiety, delicious as sleep can never be, had been an instant to her lover. She would not tell him of this happiest hour of her life.

"Kiss me. Kiss me once more, and go." All the pride of her strength and beauty, all the gratitude of her recreation she poured out over him in that passionate kiss. "I love you—so—dearly!"

The days and nights that followed were, for Evelyn, days and nights parenthesized by her first, benumbing dose of life's most powerful narcotic. Nights that were hours of neverness, beyond time, outside of space; days which she arranged unaware of cunningness or design. To her children she was a playmate become inexplicably delightful. For her lover she was inexhaustible. She lived these days and nights in a riot of physical sensation. She neither read, nor thought, nor worked, nor planned, nor remembered. She took no account of a world beyond the woods and shores of Rocky Point.

She rode with her lover on the jolting seat of his box-wagon through country lanes past farmers who leaned on hoes and stared after them, grinning sarcastically. She walked

with him through woods, over dunes, among boulders along the shore through a world that had suddenly revealed to her its beauty, seeing which brought tears of exquisite pain. She played with him in leaf-strewn nooks upholstered in lichen and moss, where the warmth of a lazy sun filtered down to them in checkered, yellow light, in hidden hollows among the dunes, carpeted with pine-needles, where gray warblers sang to them from bassinets of pepperidge and cat-briar.

Days dissolved into weeks of which she could have given no account save of isolated incidents which may have spanned a month, or a minute, like the incidents of a dream. Experiences trivial to a cynic, and commonplace in fact, came to her in all the iridescence of her deep-lying, ineradicable love of romance.

The hotel opened for its season. The first summer-guests straggled in. To Evelyn they were shadows on a screen. When Evelyn had finished her meals she would walk out behind Anna and her children through the dining-room, past the group in the corner of the porch, down the steps, smiling a little, talking, usually over-gayly, to Anna or to Allen, and so on into the locust-grove which hid her cottage-porch from their curious eyes. She did not hear the mumbled comments, or see the lifting of brows and pursing of lips. It was all inexpressibly indifferent to her. She did not know that the sight of her smiling face, her trim, prettily-gowned figure, as she went across the lawn with her children and her maid, would linger for years to come in the memories of these shadowy strangers. That, and the tormenting probability of her sinfulness.

When John came up the steps of the porch on his arrival for his first week-end with his family, Evelyn greeted him with an acute inner unrest that showed itself to her phlegmatic husband as a nervous embarrassment, not new, for which there were reasons enough. No slightest twinge of suspicion of Evelyn's fidelity—honor, he would have called it—had ever troubled John. His helpless sense of hurt pride and unaccountable failure had settled into gloomy conviction of unreasonable and monstrous injustice on the part of fate. Nothing

to do. Muddle along. Build up his business. Take his pleasure where he could find it—if he could find it. Christ knew he had started with all the good-will in the world to make this woman's life happy, to build a home, and—and she—ah, to hell with the whole mess!

So he shook Evelyn's slightly trembling hand and turned immediately to catch up Allen and Jane and put one on each shoulder and march up and down the porch grinning at their excited shouts of glee.

After supper and their return to the cottage they talked of shoes, of family matters and John's visit to Stamford. They had all asked him why in the world Evelyn never wrote any more. Aunt Carrie was plainly failing. She had talked of nothing but Evelyn. At length John yawned and said he'd had a hard day. This young Billard fellow had promised him some fishing for to-morrow and a game of tennis.

Then Evelyn began asking questions at random. When had he seen the Dixons last and how were Tommy and Bess? Tommy had been with John in Philadelphia. John had run out with him to Atlantic City for a couple of days. Yes. Bess had been there. A fleeting expression of embarrassment in her husband's face caused Evelyn's interest in Bess to become acute. She became aware of his awkward concealment of details. She was suddenly convinced that John and Bess were having a love-affair. She laughed—almost boisterously. They went inside.

"Where do I sleep?" he asked, glancing at the open door of the room adjoining the living-room.

"You may sleep here, or upstairs," she said sweetly. "Just as you prefer."

He looked at her. Then he shrugged his shoulders.

"It's a matter of indifference to me," he said.

She flushed. His statement roused no protest in her, no jealousy, no hurt. She did not know the real cause of his coldness. At that moment she felt no resentment or sorrow at the death of his love—only relief tinged with bitterness.

"I usually sleep upstairs, on account of the children. It is cooler, perhaps, down here. However, it is cool everywhere,

here, at night. I have never in all my life slept as I do here."

He kissed her good-night, hastily, as if by the way, and began taking off his coat. She went upstairs without turning her head.

On the next morning she sat at the side lines of the newly completed tennis-court and watched the game between her husband and her lover. Jane sat in the grass beside her and Allen ran after the balls his father missed. Evelyn contrasted the two: her husband, heavy, powerful, silent; her lover, slight, nervous, bubbling laughter and exclamation. She saw John's dogged will to conquer, his almost sullen unwillingness to admit inferiority. Saw him helpless before the cat-like agility of Carrington.

For the first time in her life she pitied her husband. She became his partisan, began to will him to win. She crowed with delight when one of his swift drives caught Carrington unawares, or unable to return. She "O deared!" with disappointment when John drove savagely into the net, or out of bounds. John was panting hard. His shirt was soaked with sweat.

"If my husband had a little practice he could beat you properly," cried Evelyn excitedly.

"Christ!" growled John. "I need a month down here. Then I could do something."

"I certainly wish you'd stay! We'd have no end of fun. Put in a month down here and lose that waistline."

"Humph!" snorted the head of the Ferris Shoe-Store Chain. "How about all those fish you're going to show me?"

"I can catch fish!" cried Allen, nodding his head solemnly. "Can't I, Mr. Billard?"

When Carrington asked Evelyn if she were not going with them she very hastily declined. Said she knew her husband's theories about women in a fishing-boat.

"Mr. Billard always takes mama," cried Allen, "everywhere he goes, don't you, Mr. Billard?"

Evelyn sat with Jane on the shore beneath her purple parasol and watched the little rowboat bob about with the three of them—her son, her lover, her husband. She was very, very happy.

John insisted on taking the afternoon train back to the city instead of going in the following morning. He wanted to be on the job early, he said. He shook Carrington's hand.

"I've had a bully time. Very much obliged to you."

"Not at all!" cried Carrington. "It's I. I am obliged! When are you coming again?"

John didn't know. In the meantime he'd try and get in a little practice. God, he was stiff! He kissed all his family good-by in great good-humor. He had thoroughly enjoyed his little holiday. Evelyn waved gayly at him as he turned the corner. Her puritan conscience had gone on a vacation. In the days that followed, as if she had received a special dispensation, Evelyn became more gayly reckless with her lover.

The second time John came she had no difficulty hurdling the sleeping problem. He came on a certain day toward which she had looked with a rapidly mounting fear. She was far from a shallow fool. She was farther still from a courtesan at heart. But her life-experience had unfitted her for boldness, or decision. Her selfishness was unconscious. Her cowardice was physical.

There were moments when she knew perfectly well that she was not in love with this boy. But she held her eyes tight-shut. While he talked bravely of what he would do for her and because of her she stroked his cheeks and called him her dear, dear forest-lover. When he protested that she was his by right of this and that and that no power on earth could hold them apart she smiled and covered his mouth with kisses. And this she did feeling neither wise, nor cynical, but only reveling in the moment, just as he.

But she could not wholly shut her mind to facts. Her hours alone were tormented by a growing uneasiness. Penalties there were. Consequences. Her uneasiness graduated into anxiety. Until her hours with her lover became shadows of flame thrown against a background of dread. Then she pleaded illness. Her headache was a fact. She spent a night of sleepless misery. To-morrow John would come again. And two days had passed. And nothing had happened. And she had never gone two days beyond her time, like this—un-

less— She made desperate resolutions that dissolved in fear. Behind her fear was her consciousness of deceit, of treachery, of the unforgivable sin. Behind her conscience was her cowardice.

Morning came. With it a sudden, indescribable relaxation within her body. Within her mind an incalculable relief. John came. And John enjoyed this visit even better than his first and promised to make an effort to get down oftener. When Evelyn begged him so gently to excuse her for her inability to be much of a chum for him this week-end and looked so rarely beautiful, propped in pillows on her divan, John took her hand and awkwardly fondled it and felt in his heart that something somehow was happening that would bring them together once more and make life again worth living.

As for Evelyn, she made promises to herself.

And for a time she kept them.

A letter came from Edna urging Evelyn to leave the children with Anna and come to Newport for a week of pleasure. It was a shame that John had stuck Evelyn off there at the end of the world with nothing to do but to look at cows and count pebbles on a beach! Evelyn's reply said: No! This summer belonged to her children who were so happy there, so well—so—Edna had never seen such lovable, such wonderful babies! She could not know how impossible it was for Evelyn to leave them.

To her sister Edith she wrote similarly, feeling, as she wrote, a great content with things as they were. To her father she wrote, and to Aunt Carrie, begging her aunt to forgive her temporary neglect, promising to come in September for a long visit and endless gossip. She was practicing again, she wrote, very diligently. It was such a joy to get back at serious work! That winter she would—and so forth.

On a hot night, late in July, she sat with Carrington in the little lookout on the cliff. A broken square of yellow light shone out to them from the grove of locust-trees. It was the curtained window of her children's bedroom. A full moon had risen over the fields behind them and shed a pale luster over bush and grass dripping with dew. The white beach lay

ghost-like below them, blurred here and there by boulders that assumed fantastic shapes in the uncertain light.

She had been telling Carrington of those moonlit nights at West Point which seemed now, as she talked, to have passed but yesterday. It had been very beautiful. She would never forget it. In the silence that followed she wondered where Kurt Schelling was and what he was doing and if he ever, as she, thought back to those days and nights of ineffable beauty and longed for things that might have been. She turned to Carrington who was staring gloomily out into the white night. She pulled his limp arm more closely about her.

"I never dreamed then that I could love a man as I have loved you. You have changed the whole world for me." And still Carrington stared gloomily out over the sleeping sea to where lights were twinkling at a distance incalculable. "Kiss me," she murmured. "Be sweet to me. On a night like this I want—listen!" she exclaimed, struck by a sudden thought. "All my life I have wanted to sleep out in the moonlight. Will you sleep with me to-night down there, on the beach, by the sea, under the moon—and stars?" She felt the tightening of his arm about her and whispered: "I want you to love me—there, where we can hear the sea, and—will you?"

"It's—"

"Please!" She jumped up excitedly. "Wait here. I'll bring blankets. Wait here for me! Oh, this will be—" She hurried off to her cottage. She laughed as she stumbled against a projecting root. The foolish risk she was running intensified her pleasure. She reflected with a thrill of delight that she had always been a little moon-mad. She tiptoed into her living-room, tucked under her arm the woolen cover of her divan and a blanket from the bed. She ran back to her lover.

"Come!"

They went down the stairs of the cliff, arm in arm. They spread their blankets over the white pebbles by the side of a boulder.

"Do you think any one will—?"

"No. All the lights are out in the hotel. All good Christians are asleep."

She gurgled with merriment.

"I love it. Listen!" They could hear the murmurous wash of an almost imperceptible ground-swell. "It's the sea, almost asleep, caressing the beach. For each pebble you must give me a kiss. I won't try to keep count."

"Will you be warm enough?"

"Yes. Besides, we won't sleep! Who could sleep in this heavenly night? Perhaps we will, later. I'd love to sleep here—if I could. Are you sleepy?"

"Sleepy!"

"Don't! Wait. I have an idea! Let's go swimming. Will you? Will you?"

"But you—"

"It would be wonderful! All—"

"We have no towels."

"Who cares! We'll use this blanket. Have you ever swum all naked in the sea?"

"Of course. It's marvelous."

"I never have!" She shivered with delight. She was feverishly unfastening her shoes. "Help me! I've knotted it."

Their clothing lay scattered on the beach. He put his arm about her slim, white body and helped her, limping, giggling, moaning, over the sharp pebbles to the edge of the sea. They waded in, gingerly, choking back exclamations, shocked by the sudden cold. She broke away from him and plunged and felt the cold sea-water splash over her, stinging her as with countless tiny charges of electricity, caressing her bare body with a softness indescribable. She was by no means an expert swimmer, but to-night she felt that she could go on indefinitely without tiring.

"Not too far!" sputtered Carrington, stroking swiftly out to her. "Put your hands on my shoulders." She did so and pulled him to her. They kissed. "God! This is wonderful!"

They played about; then swam back to shore. He rubbed her tingling body with the white woolen blanket. The touch

of her strangely cold, soft skin thrilled him with a kind of madness. She twisted from him and danced about on the pebbles like a frenzied mænad.

"Oh, jiminy crickets! It hurts my feet!" she gasped, suddenly collapsing on the blanket.

"Put something on! You're insane—"

"Are you cold? I never was warmer—"

"Put something on!"

She rolled herself into the dry blanket, covering her head.

"You take the other one," she mumbled.

"What time do you suppose it is?"

"Who cares," she muttered drowsily.

"But it must be— Listen. We mustn't be altogether insane. We must go up before day breaks."

"You go. I shall stay here. Tell Anna to bring me my breakfast."

"Mad-woman!"

In the first gray of light of dawn she tiptoed up the creaking steps to her cottage-porch, her two blankets tucked under her arm. With a shock of dismay she saw the door of her living-room standing open. She had certainly closed it. Stealthily she crossed into the bedroom, threw off her loosened clothes and crept into bed.

It seemed but an instant later that she heard the romping and laughter of her children, the suppressed scolding of Anna. Then Anna came, very quietly, to close the door of her bedroom.

"Don't bother, Anna. I'm awake."

"Oh!" said Anna. Evelyn saw the embarrassed expression on Anna's face.

"Tell me, Anna, did you hear anything in the night?"

"Oh, Mrs. Ferris! I was so worried!" The girl stopped, confused.

Evelyn looked into her maid's troubled face for a moment, in silence.

"Why, Anna? Why were you worried?"

The maid's face flushed.

"I wouldn't for the world, Mis' Ferris, have anything happen to you."

And the realization broke in upon Evelyn that here was a perfect servant.

"Thank you, Anna. You're a dear. You see I am perfectly all right."

She saw a suspicion of tears in Anna's wide-set, blue eyes.

Later Anna brought a letter.

"It came last night," she said. "I guess you didn't notice it on the table."

It was from John. It was postmarked Boston. Evelyn opened it. In it John informed her that he would return via Hartford and spend Thursday in Stamford with the folks. He would try and be with her on Saturday for the week-end. There was nothing of any importance, or emotional interest in the letter. Yet she read it half a dozen times.

For two days she saw Carrington only to nod, or to pass the time of day. Her moon-mad night with him on the beach was having its normal reaction. The only other apparent result was a cold in the head that gave her a slight sniffles and a reddened nose. Friday night he walked back with her after supper to her cottage.

After the children and Anna had gone upstairs she knew she had made a mistake to let him stay. They had drifted into a semi-serious talk. She felt irritable with him and angry with herself for being so without reason. While he was telling her his plan for adding a wing to the hotel another year she kept wondering what she would talk about with John the following night. She was hungry for news from Stamford. Carrington thought he knew the reason for her coldness. He was partly right. Boy-like, he made the blunder of staying on in the face of something which, had he been wise, he would have known that no man can combat except by absence. At length he was gloomily pleading for her love, she protesting that he was talking quite unreasonably, that surely he could have no cause to reproach her with coldness or—or—anything else for that matter.

There is no habit so insidious, so hard to overcome as physi-

cal familiarity. It is difficult indeed for two people who have lain in passionate embrace to disassociate themselves and their relations from that fact. Neither Evelyn nor her lover was phlegmatic, or wise. Partly because she pitied his evident misery, partly because she longed to deaden her own unrest their conversation terminated as boring conversations between lovers frequently do. But Evelyn, who was nervous because she was physically at low ebb, made him promise to go very early and let her sleep. She said she was afraid that everybody was suspicious, was watching them. When she had blown out the light in her living-room she locked its entrance-door for the first time in weeks.

Gradually she forgot her boredom of the earlier evening. Gradually the faint gnawing of her conscience ceased. Gradually she forgot everything in the spiritual anesthesia of her roused passion. Then a sudden shock of paralysis.

Some one knocking at the entrance-door.

Violently she pushed Carrington from her. She remained for a moment leaning on her elbow listening, stiff with fright.

The door of the bedroom was open. Through it she could see the sashes of one of the living-room windows framing white moonlight. Some one was stirring on the porch outside. Then another, louder knock.

"Oh—oh—oh—what—" She was panting with terror.

"Sh-h! Don't move!" He put his arm across her body.

"I must! Anna will— Oh God! What shall I do?"

"I tell you, don't—"

"Stop! Let me go!"

She wrenched away from him and sprang out of bed. Without knowing that she did it she groped for her kimono, lying across the foot of the bed, and slipped it over her chemise.

"Don't move," she whispered. As she closed the bedroom door she heard Anna coming down the stairs. "Anna! Never mind. I'm going to the door. Go back to bed."

She heard a heavy step outside, then a deep, low voice.

"It's I, Eve. Don't be scared."

At the sound of that voice she stood for an instant frozen. She glanced at the closed bedroom door, then slowly went to

the entrance-door and unlocked it. In the heavy shadow of the porch his body seemed enormous. At his feet was his yellow suitcase.

"Hello!"

"You—you have frightened me to death!"

He chuckled at the sight of her white, drawn face.

"Didn't you get my telegram?"

Her mind was a roaring void.

"No. No. I got no telegram."

"Thought it was funny you didn't have some one meet me. I guessed my message hadn't reached you. That's the way they do things in these damned hick towns. Don't I come in?" He picked up the suitcase.

"Oh—wait till I light a lamp."

"Don't bother. It's as light as day. Isn't this a gorgeous night? Let me do it."

She was blindly fumbling with matches. She let him take the box.

"How—did you come?"

"New London boat. Took a chance. Just caught it on the fly."

"What time is it?"

"Had a devil of a time finding a rig at the dock. Some town! It isn't late." He was grinning good-humoredly. He had lighted the wick. "How do you work this contraption?" She adjusted the chimney and shade. "Time?—why, it's only—not quite eleven. What time do you go to bed when I'm not here?" He laughed. She pulled her kimono closely about her. Her teeth chattered. He glanced at her bare feet. His voice changed. "Let me get your slippers."

"Oh no!" She laughed nervously. "I'm not a bit cold. I was so frightened, that's all. Take this."

She placed a chair for him with its back to the closed door of the bedroom. She sat opposite him on the edge of the divan. She made a desperate effort to pawn off her semi-hysteria as vivacity. She succeeded—with that uncanny presence of mind, that instinctive ability to act which makes woman in the last analysis incomprehensible to a male. She talked at

random. As she talked her thoughts were racing frantically.

John told her of the reason for his coming. Yesterday her Aunt Carrie had had a severe relapse. Her rheumatic condition had affected her heart. His voice was grave. He had waited over night to see if there was any change for the better. He shrugged his shoulders. Her Aunt Carrie was a very sick woman.

"Oh, John—will she—she won't—"

"I hope not. Only I thought—I thought you'd want to know. I didn't want to frighten you by a telegram." Distinctly she heard the creaking of a bed through the closed door. John seemed to hear nothing. "I thought we could talk it over and perhaps, if you think best, you might run over for a day or two—"

"Oh—why didn't some one tell me— How could I—"

"This came very suddenly. I suppose you could leave the children with Anna." Again she heard a sharp squeak of a metal spring. Then dead silence. She felt as if some one were choking her. John was staring at her. "Don't," he said very gently, "be unnecessarily frightened. I don't think there's any immediate—I don't know. I want you to do whatever you think is right."

"Of course I must go!" she moaned.

He came over and sat beside her; almost timidly he put his arm about her. As he did so came the faint rattle of a window-screen sliding open.

"Tell me!" she said. "Could—" she swallowed. "Could you talk with her?"

He comforted her. The touch of her thinly clothed body thrilled him. He realized that she was pressing closely to him. His arms tightened about her. He kissed her as he had not kissed her in many drab, empty months. With a surge of emotion he realized that she was not passively resisting his caress. And again, unmistakably, the squeak and rattle of a window.

"What was that?" asked John, turning his head. Her body became tense in his arms.

"I heard nothing."

"I heard a window in there." He was looking at the closed bedroom door.

"You frighten me! It's Anna upstairs. She's awake."

For three seconds he sat, listening. No sound. He felt the slight trembling—or shivering of her body. He shook his head as if to clear his vision.

"Come. You must get back to bed. You'll catch cold." He rose. She also rose and threw her arms about him.

"Come upstairs with me," she murmured. "Please!"

"Evelyn!" He swallowed. An instant's intangible suspicion, instantly dismissed. His voice grew hoarse with passion. "Do you want—really want me to come?"

She nodded, and clung to him as he kissed her. Nor would she let him go when he bent down for his suitcase, and urged him up the stair ahead of her, murmuring: "Never mind the light. I'll blow it out."

As she did so she suddenly remembered that her bed upstairs was untouched.

"Wait!" she cried. She hurried up the stairs to him. "You must see the children," she whispered.

"Not now. Let's not—"

"Yes! yes! You must—" she insisted. "Anna is awake. Go quietly—Anna!" she whispered. "Mr. Ferris has come."

She pushed him into the children's room. Then hurried into her own. She pulled down the bed-covers, rumpled the sheets, twisted the pillow in her hands, flung her kimono to the bed, slipped her night-dress over her head and, hearing his step, hesitated an instant, then jumped into bed. She pulled the covers up over her as he closed the door of their bedroom behind him.

"Do you need a light?"

"No!" She shivered violently. "I'm cold!"

12

She awoke as one rouses from a drug. She heard Allen romping and shouting in the children's room beyond her closed door. A confused recollection of what had happened, of her terror,

relief, remorse, a confusion of husband and lover in a drunkenness of passion that sickened while it inflamed her. A night of fear and madness in which she seemed to herself to have acted from a kind of perverted instinct, yet with a cunning as repulsive to her now as it was astonishing.

Long after her ponderous husband had sunk into similarly ponderous sleep she had slipped softly out of his limp, heavy arms and tiptoed unsteadily down the stair to the bedroom below. She had stood in the dark at the foot of that tumbled bed, swaying slightly from physical exhaustion and spiritual nausea. A whirring within her as if each relaxed fiber of her muscles still vibrated from the storm through which she had passed. She had stood in the dark and never knew whether it was for a moment or an hour. Dumbly she had stood there, her face twisting from tremors of self-disgust, shrinking from the touch of her night-dress, of herself. Unclean.

Then she had hastily pulled the covers over that reproachful bed, had gathered up her scattered clothes and crept back again upstairs. She had lain stealthily down beside her still sleeping husband and with a sigh that was a stifled groan had dropped into unconsciousness.

. Morning. Noisy chatter of her children. She kept her head turned away from John, but from shame, not repugnance. Then something, perhaps a difference in his breathing, told her that he was awake, was looking at her. Her eyelids fluttered.

"Good-morning—Eve—my darling—" She turned toward him, unable to speak, with eyes tight shut and felt his arms close gently about her, felt his lips on her hair and forehead and cheek. Heard his voice, hoarse, expressing a measureless content. "You—incredible—little witch!"

He went on talking to her, paying little attention to her murmured replies. Through her self-disgust she realized his happiness, realized the profound change that had come into his relation to her. A timid knocking at the door and the voice of Allen.

"Mama!—Daddy!—Can I come in?" John called to him. There was a gleeful note in his voice. And Allen came run-

ning eagerly to their bed. "You two are awful lazy!—I'm hungry!—I been waitin'—"

"You have! A darn shame, I call it!" John leaped out of bed.

She watched her husband romp with Allen and then with Jane. His ludicrous boyishness brought tears to her eyes. With them a bitter, solemn resolve to atone to these three. She told him to hurry over to the inn before the dining-room closed. She wouldn't go. Very often, she confessed, she loafed in bed, mornings, and had lunch and breakfast in one. She laughed. His sister Edna had taught her that lazy habit. She listened to him splashing water in the tiny bathroom, to his tuneless humming of a presumable melody. Then he went with the children. She lay there—thinking.

Carrington would come to his table. They would say good-morning to each other. Good-morning, across a bottomless gulf: unconscious of the bottomless gulf which was herself. Neither one of them had ever seen its depths. For the first time she herself was aware of them.

She was no longer a child; no longer asleep. Acutely, painfully awake, she lay and thought of what she must do. Suddenly she knew that she did not want to see her lover again. She wanted to run away. Aunt Carrie. She sat up. Then she lay down again. The morning train had gone. Neither she nor John had mentioned it—had thought of it. She had neglected everything, everybody. Go! She must go. Anywhere. Stamford. Her father.

John came back to tell her that he was going to the beach with the children. Mr. Billard was getting a bathing-suit for him. Would she come for a swim before lunch? But Aunt Carrie! Had he forgotten—

Not at all. He had asked young Billard about trains. Nothing until four o'clock that afternoon. They would have plenty of time—

"Something tells me," said Evelyn, anxiously, "that Aunt Carrie needs me. That we should have—"

"Nonsense. There's no use—"

"You always laugh at my premonitions," she said, staring at

him gloomily, "but, nevertheless, I know that I ought to be there."

"Well, I'm not saying—"

"Suppose she—"

"Don't be foolish, Eve. What's the use of supposing? We'll take the afternoon train into Brooklyn and stay at the house over night, or else go out directly. Only I ought to telegraph."

"What about the children?"

"Leave them with Anna. You'll be back—"

"I don't want to leave them!"

"Come! Don't let it spoil our day, dear. Do you realize that this is the—the happiest day I've had in God only knows when? Please!"

He bent over her. She put her arms about his neck and kissed him.

"I want you to be happy with me," she sobbed. "I want to make up for—for so many, many things!"

At five o'clock that afternoon Evelyn sat in the train with John on their way to Brooklyn. She was definitely separated from her children for the first time since their birth. This train seemed to be sweeping her away from all moorings. Could it be possible that but three months had passed since she had come out along this same track to Rocky Point? She had given her limp hand to Carrington in good-by on the station platform. Mentally she still saw him standing there, alone, bareheaded, as the train started into motion past him. She had nodded to him through the window. John seemed not to have noticed the expression on Carrington's face. Good-by.

Carrington had said:

"Don't worry about a thing, Mrs. Ferris. You will find everything as it should be when you come back."

She had shaken her head. "I don't know. I don't know," and had turned hastily to board the train.

She stared out at the landscape. Something told her that she would never come back. Never.

It was dark when they arrived in Brooklyn. They had decided to go on that evening to Stamford. In the Grand Cen-

tral Station John telegraphed Mr. Grainger. Then telephoned Katy. The house opposite the park still seemed to Evelyn incalculably far away. They had no time to eat. Consequently John became irritable. On the way out to Stamford he read the Herald. Evelyn stared at a bunch of cherries dangling from the crown of a woman's hat in the seat ahead of her. A conductor punched their tickets. Evelyn recognized him. Same man. The same skeptical gesture as he held up her ticket and made that little click with his punch. How many times had she ridden out on this train to Stamford? And now, again. Something carrying her in slow circles past the same signposts that meant nothing and led nowhere. Greenwich. Rosemary Hall. Where was she bound? Aunt Carrie. Shifting pictures of her life in that cottage where now her aunt was waiting for her—

"Here we are, Eve. Tired? You look fagged. Never mind. Gee, I've been smelling Aunt Pru's Saturday pan of beans ever since we passed Greenwich."

She saw her father on the platform. He looked old, old. She hurried to him. He was smiling. There was no merriment in his smile. The pressure of his arms about her, the brushing of his beard against her cheek brought tears to her eyes. Her old father!

"How is she?"

Her father's arm tightened about her. He spoke quietly.

"Aunt Carrie passed away, dear—at four o'clock—"

"Oh— No!"

At four o'clock they had still been sitting on the porch at Rocky Point with her children and John, waiting for Carrington Billard to come with a carriage.

"The end was perfectly quiet—without pain. She was unconscious."

"Oh—oh, papa—John—" She groped helplessly for support. John's hand was on her shoulder.

"Dearest girl—be brave now—don't—"

Don't!—forever, don't!

"No one suspected that Aunt Carrie's condition was actually alarming until last night. It was her heart."

Last night! When she was lying in bed first with one man, then with another. The thought of her aunt alone, dead, in that cottage up the hill lay on her like an incubus. She dreaded to go there, as if her aunt's dead lips might cry out to her. Guilt; irremovable.

When she entered that cottage on the following morning her father and John had come with her, but she was alone. She sat by the open coffin of her dead aunt and gazed at the wax-white, total negation of that face that had been so dear to her. She did not know when her father and her husband turned and tiptoed out of the room. It seemed as if at any moment that smile would come. It seemed as it were there. Suddenly the conviction came to her that her aunt alone understood this tangle that confused and tortured her; that her aunt alone could understand her remorse, alone could forgive her sin. Suddenly her aunt seemed unexplainably near, and her Grandmother Jane. Here they had lived. In this room they had slept and died. It was as if she held the hand of each and poured out to each her penance and her blind, eager groping for happiness. Intimately near. A part of herself. She heard the voice of her grandmother—that gentle, singing voice that had come down through the years, sometimes melodiously clear like the song of some far-away island in an enchanted sea, murmurous with the singing of birds.

"All the rest fades finally away into the shadow of the past. Only what is lovely lives on and on forever."

She sat motionless by the open coffin of her dead aunt and prayed, confusing God and the presence of her aunt and grandmother, prayed for forgiveness, and felt that God, who was her aunt and her grandmother and her own mother, was very near, as a part of herself, as a part of a great calmness like the calmness of sunset. She felt as if, in spite of her sin and her shallowness and ignorance and selfishness, she were something holy because she was a part of all these. And that from now on she would remember this and because of this fact—and her prayer flushed into resolve; and courage flowed in upon her.

On the following afternoon she stood by an open grave at

the side of two mounds covered, now, with flowers, and watched men lower the coffined body of her aunt to rest beside those of her mother and of her grandmother; watched Dr. Beebe, the minister, drop a bit of earth into that ugly hole; heard those solemn words so bitterly fatalistic; felt the pressure of her husband's arm around her and felt as though some indescribable process had made her clean. As though she could begin all over again.

That evening she discussed with John what she should do. She was very sensible, very quiet. She dismissed his suggestion of returning to Rocky Point with a single word and gesture. Nor could she stay here with her father and Aunt Pru. There was one place she wanted to be. Only one. At home with him and her children. He should go at once and bring the children back home. When he eagerly suggested that they could have their pleasures on week-end excursions she smiled gloomily and shook her head.

"I'm not thinking of pleasure." Then he kissed her very tenderly, and she said in a curiously sorrowful tone: "I'm going to try, John, to make you happy—you and the children."

She did. And succeeded beyond her expectations.

When the door of their Brooklyn home opened before her and she smelled that familiar odor of home; when Katie, who stood inside the open door, stretched out her arms to her with an exclamation of delight; when she walked through the cool, immaculate rooms; when she gazed out of her bedroom window to the great trees of the park; when she lay in the clean, sweet-smelling bed which she and John had bought together years before; when, a day or two later, John came with Anna and her children, and she saw eager smiles on all their faces because of this union, she felt a happiness and content settling down upon her such as she had never known in all her life before. It was over. Still her life to live for her children—and her husband.

September came.

And one day, with a chill of realization like the chill of malaria, Evelyn knew she was pregnant again. Then all

that she had willed to forget came rushing back upon her and she sank down upon a chair in her bedroom and trembled with an awful fear.

She tried to think, tried to reason. Her thinking became a series of pictures from which she shrank in terror. She saw John standing over her with his heavy jaw set in that terrible way, white and threatening. She was trying to explain—what? She was in her home in Stamford and her father was closing the door of his little den behind them. No! She would call Carrington Billard to her and tell him—she shuddered. Suppose she was wrong? A score of odious possibilities, but not the simple one of destroying this life that had started within her. It had nothing to do with courage, or cowardice, or morality. It was simply that abortion did not present itself as a logical possibility, not even as a desperate necessity. It was not in her to face an issue as Aunt Pru might have faced it. Just as she suffered with an intensity of which Aunt Pru could have no conception.

The months that followed were months of torture, at times purely physical, but always inescapably of mental torment. She made a thousand resolves that dissipated into dread. She knew she was a coward. She felt at times like one in a dream who faces annihilation unable to move or cry out.

Her pregnancy became a creeping terror.

Great as was her fear, it was her remorse that tormented her most. Her puritan conscience which for a short time had slept so soundly was now like an inflamed appendix. She magnified her fall from grace until she was in her eyes a despicable creature deserving all that she dreaded, and more—much more! Her pregnancy seemed, at such moments, a punishment direct from God for her sin. When her common-sense told her that this was absurd distortion of fact her common-sense also told her in the same moment that no husband would stand for what she had done—and least of all, John Ferris.

When at rare intervals she thought of this coming child as an individual, not a threat, or a symbol of sin, all her notions of prenatal influence started up with three-fold violence and

she thought with dismay of what this child would be. The memory of those happy months of her first pregnancy came to her and she groaned aloud.

At times she reasoned with herself that in some miraculous way she might have escaped the consequences of her passion with Carrington Billard and then, on that night— The calendar could support such a theory. But Doctor Ogilvie, whom she had at length called in and who had at once confirmed the fact of her pregnancy, answered her vague, anxious questions in a way that wiped out any faintly lingering faith to which she had clung as to the reliability of calendars. Then he, in turn, asked questions which she answered with a furious embarrassment.

It was weeks before she summoned the courage to tell John. It was a moment which she faced with a dread only second to that with which she faced the fact of her condition itself.

The way John received the news made her remorse almost insufferable. It was then that she felt herself utterly despicable. Had she been certain, then, of the time of her conception, she would never have been able to live through that night without telling him the whole wretched truth. It was her uncertainty, her shrinking dread of inflicting pain on another, of destroying this new, profound happiness of her husband, his boundless content for which she now passionately longed, which showed itself daily in a hundred ways, that paralyzed her. Her unreasonable dread of breaking up this home, of its effect on the future of her children. On that night, after John had fallen asleep beside her, she cowered over to her side of the bed and had a foretaste of her ancestral hell.

Seven months later, on the twenty-eighth of April, her third baby was born. It was a boy.

When the nurse entered the rear bedroom with this baby in her arms John leaped up from his chair like a man starting from a nightmare. He had waited, waited hour after interminable hour, trembling like a damned soul at the sound of those dull moans that came to him from behind closed doors.

He had ground his teeth, and cursed. He had sworn that all his life could not atone to her for this endless night of agony.

He held in his arms his second son; a tiny grotesque. Tears started to John's eyes. A profound emotion compounded of pride, of relief, of reverence thrilled him, an emotion rooted deep in his consciousness of fatherhood. Even he could see that the nurse was right. Evelyn. Thin, scrawny, like a drowned kitten. A Grainger. A ludicrous resemblance to the angular features of Aunt Pru.

Awkwardly he passed the child back to the nurse.

"How is she?" he asked.

"She is all right—now. It has been—" She shook her head. "Sometimes, you know, the mother can help—if she tries. But your wife—" She shrugged her shoulders.

Six weeks later the Reverend Doctor Beebe stood beside Evelyn's bed and trickled a drop or two of water over the baby's blue-veined, sharply outlined forehead—

"In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, I baptize thee—John Ferris."

It had been her husband's wish.

13

A little over a year later, that is, in July of the year eighteen ninety-five, Evelyn sat with her father-in-law on the big veranda of the Ferris mansion, as it was called in Stamford, and mildly stated her opinion that Edna was quite within her rights if she insisted on marrying this Hungarian. Whereat the old man gave something between a snort and a whistle that sounded like: "fiddler!"

Through the lace-like foliage of giant elms peeped the gables of her old home, next door—very white, now, and New Englandy. Through the lazy morning air came shouts of children in play on its vine-draped porch. Then silence into which, shrilly, the high-pitched voice of Aunt Pru inserted itself. Then laughter; a clatter of feet; children running beyond the high hedge fence.

Hadn't she herself been a pianist?—of a sort, anyway?

Mr. Ferris' snort became clear-cut and definite. All right for a girl to play a piano! All right for any one to play a piano, or a fiddle, for that matter, if they preferred a fiddle. And Evelyn had a genuine gift. But he reckoned that "all that" had been pretty darn well knocked out of her as soon as her children started coming along. But this fellow— It was a man's job to earn a living! What kind of a living could this Polack earn?—All right; Hungarian then! What's the difference? What kind of a man was he? Mr. Ferris' face began to flush ominously, and Mr. Ferris began to tap the arms of his chair with his gnarled, bony fingers. Evelyn patted his arm, said, "There, there, daddy, don't—" At which Mr. Ferris jerked his arm away and banged down on the wicker chair-arm. Did she call him a man? Evelyn said she hadn't called him anything. It was Mr. Ferris who—

"By golly! When a woman gets to be the age of Edna she's got no—she gets all— Have you ever seen this fellow?— Well! Do you know that Edna's a good fif-teen years—she says ten—she lies!— What kind of a combination is that? She's an old woman! The fool!"

"It's not true! Edna's only—"

"She's forty-five!"

"But, even so, she isn't—"

"She's forty-five I tell you! For God's sake, don't I know how old my daughter is?"

"Forty-five," began Evelyn.

"Old enough to be a grandmother! And runnin' around with this God-all-forlorn—pff-f-f!"

This escape of steam seemed to relieve the old man's internal pressure. Evelyn made no reply. She was contemplating with a mixture of dismay and admiration her sister-in-law's reckless pursuit of pleasure. Mr. Ferris was muttering:

"How the devil that rattlehead ever happened to be my daughter is beyond me—always was."

Evelyn wondered likewise—always had. More particularly since she had married Edna's brother. No doubt about the relation between John and his father! Evelyn could see John at eighty sitting exactly like this, banging the arm of

his chair and getting into a rage about Jane. Jane! Eighty. Forty-five. Good heavens, they were all getting old! Twenty-nine. And her hair during this last year had turned as gray— There came a numb, sinking sensation. Old!

Only two years ago she had been in the midst of her wild affair with Carrington Billard. Those two years seemed a century. She had never heard a word from, or about him. He was gone—swallowed up in the mists of an outer world. Her sinful passion had burned itself out in bitter penance and physical suffering; had burned so wholly as to leave no detectible spark, scarcely a trace of ash—only an emptiness, slowly filling with the accretions of time and the everyday.

This summer she was spending at Stamford, living in the Ferris mansion—that great house which to her, as a child, had seemed so forbidding and so far away. They were living with John's father because Edith had come on from Chicago for a visit to her old home. Edith had brought with her her two children, Herbert and Gloria—also a maid. A family reunion. It was all very lovely for every one—except Aunt Pru.

When Evelyn had first seen Edith after these many years she had cried out in dismay:

"How did it happen?"

And Edith, whose weight was a tender subject with her, had flushed and exclaimed:

"What in the world is the matter with your hair?"

Evelyn wondered what Frank looked like in the flesh. Mr. Marshall was now president of the Mid-West Loan and Trust Company, which was rapidly developing into one of the more formidable institutions of what Frank affectionately called "Our great country"—as if he stood there with one hand on her shoulder. Edith no longer felt the necessity, or advantage of mentioning Frank's money-making capabilities. Everybody knew he was a millionaire. It was the World's Fair that had slipped the keystone into the arch of his fortune and made it solid.

Had Mr. Marshall been pagan instead of severely Presbyterian he would have erected in his library-corner where

stood the old grandfather-clock an altar to "The Unearned Increment." And each day his Irish upstairs-maid would have laid on it a wreath of flowers. Instead of this Mr. Marshall went to church punctually every Sunday and solemnly spread a five-dollar bill upon the respectfully proffered plate to cover the silver of his less devout neighbors.

In Chicago Frank, too, had become something like an institution. The sign and symbol on his letter-heads—that is, on the bank's letter-heads—was a granite cliff on the face of which were carved certain fundamental social concepts like Fidelity, Thrift—Evelyn could never remember them. Only the gigantic cliff. That was Frank.

Herbert was now about fourteen. He might have been twenty. He might have been anything. He was, in fact, a surprising amount of flesh for his age, whatever it may have been. Edith declared, fondly, that he was the image of his father. He already showed unmistakable traces of financial genius. Evelyn detested him. Gloria was different. Very different. Her hair was black. As black, if possible, as were her snapping eyes. She was as tall as Herbert and weighed little or nothing, considering her length. She was incessantly darting about, here, there, everywhere, asking questions, putting everybody to inconvenience. Allen had fallen desperately in love with her at first sight. It was pathetic to watch the effect on eight-year-old Allen of his wholly unrequited passion. At least, Evelyn thought it pathetic. Her beautiful boy a slave to this selfish little minx! Edith thought it darling. Twelve-year-old Gloria thought it terribly amusing.

Little Jane formed an infinitesimal X in this quadratic. Like the inappreciable gas of the tail of a comet she trailed along after the nuclear Herbert—and at a relatively similar distance. Usually nowhere. Evelyn, seeing her there, would run to Jane, clasp her in her arms and gurgle:

"Never you mind! You're mother's own darling baby girl and—"

"I'm not a baby! I do' wanta be a baby! I wanta play wif Allen!"

These weeks were not a period of unmixed delight for Aunt Pru. She endured. At times she folded her hands in a kind of desperate confusion. At times she allowed baby John's trained nurse to sit in her kitchen, even to help her at her endless tasks and sympathized with the girl's equally ceaseless problem of keeping her fretful charge from annoying everybody in the two households. It was Mr. Grainger who most enjoyed these weeks of Indian summer. He idled about the yard, watched his grandchildren at play, walked over to his old neighbor's porch for an hour's chat—all the while with that smile on his furrowed face and that twinkle in his deep-set gray eyes which Evelyn, as a child, had confused with her idea of how God looked down on the world from his throne up in the sky somewhere.

Charlie and neighbor Al no longer played chess. The word "mate" excited the old man too much. He would clench his jaws, his face would turn a purplish crimson; he would slam his heavy, hairy hand down on the board in inexpressible disgust. So one day, after such a scene, Mary Grainger had set her lips, had carried the board and the old leather-box of chess-men up into the garret and had hidden them in a trunk. Mr. Grainger, to her amazement, had never asked her from that day on what had become of them. The notebook with its record of games lay, now, forgotten in the upper left-hand drawer of the old desk in Mr. Grainger's den off the living-room.

One Saturday afternoon Evelyn went with her stepmother to call on the other Mrs. Grainger. Howard was not at home. His wife explained that Howard had gone to a machine-shop in Greenwich to tinker with one of his everlasting inventions. Every Saturday he did this. On his way home he would stop at the saloon down by the wharf and drink a few glasses of beer. Then he would din her ears full of how they were all going to be rich some day. Howard's wife didn't tell Evelyn of the family comparisons he would make in these loquacious moments.

Evelyn saw Howard, however, on the day before she returned to Brooklyn. He hadn't changed. Only a little more

stolid, a little more impossible. She shook his hand, then laughed and kissed him. He acted embarrassed at her show of affection. Evelyn couldn't remember that Edith had ever mentioned their brother during her visit.

So Evelyn went back with her little family to Brooklyn and started Allen off for his second and Jane for her first year in the private school a few blocks down Eighth Avenue. Each afternoon, while Anna dressed and amused the baby at home, Evelyn would call for her two children and take them for a walk in the park. The trained nurse had been discharged.

In January Mr. Ferris' old housekeeper found him one morning sitting apparently asleep in his leather-chair beside a sputtering lamp. His straight-bowed glasses lay on the floor beside him. He had not been reading. At least there was no book near at hand. He seldom read. He would put on his glasses and sit there alone by the lamp—as if it helped him to think. The old lady had looked a second time, screamed, and run over bareheaded through the snow to call Mr. Grainger.

They buried him beside that wife of his whom no one seemed to remember. When the will was read Evelyn realized something of what had lain hidden behind that rugous old mask. Little bequests for everybody from neighbor Charlie on down to old Mike, the gardener. A third of the old man's fortune—and the figures had made Evelyn gasp—had been left to his namesake. When John told her that this money, at interest, would make Allen by the time he reached age something better than a millionaire, Evelyn felt a chill of fear and glanced over at Allen, who was playing with a kitten on the floor, as if he had suddenly been transformed into something very awe-inspiring.

The fact of John's and therefore her own sudden increase in wealth did not greatly impress Evelyn. They had always been comfortable. Except for the flurry two years before which she had already forgotten she had never had a worry regarding living-expense. To be sure the Ferris Shoe-Store Chain did not reach, as Mr. Grainger had once enthusi-

astically predicted, from "Augusta-main to Sa'fr'cisco." John had given up that idea. He had gone back to the family first-love. For some time he had been much more interested in leather and the Greenwich plant than in shoes and chain-stores. It was less complicated. It was more solid—bulkier —like himself. Except for the house itself and contents, which had been given to Edna outright, her share in the estate was entailed with all authority vested in John.

"I wonder if dad had any idea I'd ever live in the old barn?" laughed Edna as they were sitting upstairs in the Stamford house in what had formerly been Edna's bedroom just after the reading of the will. "I think I'll give it to the town for a morgue. Do they need a morgue?—Well, John, you've got all the worry—as usual. Tell me what I'll have to spend. And for heaven's sake don't be as stingy as dad."

Then she kissed Evelyn and said, gayly:

"You see, Eve dear, it pays to be good—and do your little duty."

Tears started into Evelyn's eyes as she tightened her arms about her sister-in-law's neck and murmured:

"You're the loveliest woman in the world!"

Suddenly she saw herself as a child sitting in this very room, gazing in awe at this very Edna who stretched her bare arms voluptuously over her head, then reached for a gold cigarette-case.

Later that winter Evelyn was staring with her characteristic little scowl of interest at a puzzling maze of white lines on a blue background, trying to visualize the halls and rooms and stairs and baths and parlors and solarium and billiard-room and library and incredible fittings and conveniences which these lines represented. It was the architect's drawings of the new residence which John was to build at once on the old site. It was hard to imagine herself living in such a house. By midsummer its outer granite walls loomed imposingly amid the debris of construction, she and John were listening to their architect's harangues on furniture-periods and color-schemes and Evelyn was trying to assure herself

that all this was not wild extravagance, but only what was due and proper to this new home, the deed of which, John said, lay in her own private box in a safe-deposit vault.

The last week in August she spent in Atlantic City on a visit with Edna. John had insisted on her going alone, on having a complete rest. Evelyn compromised by taking only Jane with her. The wife of Doctor Henderson happened to be in Atlantic City at the time of Evelyn's visit. Evelyn had not kept up the acquaintance she had formed with her a few years before. However, Mrs. Henderson invited Evelyn and Edna on the last day of Evelyn's visit to have tea with her in a near-by hotel.

When Evelyn with Edna and little Jane entered the lobby of this hotel she saw Mrs. Henderson talking at the hotel desk with a rather snappily-dressed young fellow. At this sight Evelyn stopped for a moment, dead. The man was Carrington Billard.

When he saw her he started forward eagerly.

"Mrs. Ferris!"

She bowed, murmured something like, "How do you do."

"Mama, please don't squeeze me so!"

She was holding Jane's little nose tight-pressed against her. Mrs. Henderson introduced Mr. Billard to Edna.

"He is the manager here," she explained.

"Assistant," corrected Carrington.

"You say you have our table—"

Evelyn's face was burning. He was leading them out through the dining-room to the veranda. She prayed that he would say nothing, would go. But as they sat down he held her chair and said:

"I'm delighted to see you again!—And Jane! She doesn't remember me—not at all—does she?"

It seemed she didn't. Then Evelyn was obliged to explain. Something told her that she wasn't fooling Edna. When Carrington had left them Edna looked at her in a certain way and said:

"He's rather attractive, isn't he?"

And Evelyn felt her silly blood rising again.

A dozen questions had risen to her lips. She had asked none of them. So he was here. Clerk in a hotel. What had become of all his plans? Of—everything? When she left the hotel she walked hastily through the lobby without a glance toward the desk. No one stopped her.

That evening John came to take her home. She did not mention to him the fact of Carrington Billard's presence there. Nor, by chance, did Edna, nor Jane. They seemed to have forgotten the incident. Evelyn let it remain so—with all the rest. The thing that amazed her as she thought of it on her way back to Brooklyn was her realization of the fact that her meeting with Carrington Billard had roused nothing whatever except a moment's acute embarrassment. Those months on Rocky Point seemed now to her to span a fit of insanity.

During the following winter they lived in a suite of rooms in the Clarendon Hotel while their new house was being completed. In May, a little less than a year after they had broken up their old home, Evelyn and John had their first dinner served in the new, oak-paneled dining-room which their architect had designed after an old colonial model—in imitation of an imitation.

Evelyn drank deep draughts of this new pleasure of possession. Through the curtains of her great library-window she saw people stop on the sidewalk along the park opposite and point to the new show-house. They were speaking with pride of the rapid development of the city of Brooklyn. She had three servants now, not counting the laundress and cleaning-woman. Old Katie had gone. She was too old to undertake this sudden flight. She was up in Stamford as caretaker of the old Ferris mansion. But Anna was still with her. Anna, Evelyn reflected, would always be with her. The new cook was a kind of a lady. Evelyn was a bit afraid of her. Her upstairs girl was a Finn—whatever that was. But she came highly recommended. Evelyn wandered about her rooms and halls trying to reconcile herself to all this and convincing herself that she was both a very happy woman as well as a very fortunate one.

A week or two later, after they had theoretically settled in their new home, Evelyn was sitting with John beside the heavy oaken table in their new library and glancing over that page of the Brooklyn Eagle which listed the marriages, births, and death-notices. These things, for some abstract reason, always interested Evelyn. John was trying to reconcile some bills that had come in with his idea of what was right and proper. Suddenly he threw down a handful of papers and shivered. Evelyn looked at him astonished.

"What's the matter?"

"I don't know," he growled. "It's these damn—" he stopped. His eyes roved around the soft-tinted walls and glassed-in bookcases of their new library.

"What?" asked Evelyn in dismay, trying to follow his shifting glance.

"Br-rh-h!" said John, shaking his head violently. "I've felt it all evening."

"You have a chill!"

"God! You're a wonderful guesser!"

A half-hour later John was huddled between blankets on one of the new twin-beds of their beautiful new bedroom and Evelyn was bringing in a tray of hot rum-punch. John's teeth were still chattering.

"It's these god-dam' walls! It's no place for a white man to live. I told you we oughtn't to come here till fall!"

Evelyn tried to comfort him. She was thoroughly frightened. Doctor Ogilvie was on his way there. John's friend, Dr. Henderson, was on a confinement case in the hospital. John's chill culminated in a violent attack of vomiting. He was suffering acute pain.

"Liver," said Dr. Ogilvie. "Nothing to do with walls. He's got to take care of himself."

And that was Evelyn's first introduction to the science of sickroom dietetics.

However, John stubbornly insisted that the root of his acute liver-attack lay in fresh plaster and took to his suddenly imposed diet as a man of his weight and temperament usually does. Then one night he remembered Carlsbad.

A month later John was on his way to the palingenetic mud-baths of Bohemia. With John were his wife, their three children and two maids who sat on the upper deck of a North German Lloyd steamer and waved good-by to the Statue of Liberty.

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Times without number Evelyn had imagined herself, but not like this, in endless ocean; being borne, but not like this, somewhere beyond that merging of sea and sky where distance becomes incalculable and time an adjective. In her dreams she had been alone, had flown over leaping seas, hearing the sound of wind through the rigging, feeling the sting of salt-foam on her cheeks, herself a mystery, part and parcel of a greater one. Even in earlier years when dreams had been vivid and life less obvious she had smiled at these imaginings, recognized them as a distorted jumble of her grandmother's stories plus her secret longing for all that life had never brought; beauty and love—that disembodied beauty and bowelless love of a girl's day-dreams. Yet these dreams had come and come again.

She sat, now, on a deck of a German liner and nervously watched her children lest some mad impulse send them over the rail down into that distant and sullen-seeming sea. She tucked the steamer-blanket about her husband, who still complained of that god-damned dull grind beneath his lower ribs. She watched a procession of restless males and females who blotted out horizon and any possible sense of isolation.

She wrote letters in the salon, threw rings at a post with Allen and Jane, became acquainted with some of these people who had been staring at her, a Chicago man who owned a department-store—and did he know Mr. Frank Marshall? Well! He rather reckoned he knew Mr. Frank Marshall!—A whisky-manufacturer, a congressman from Utah. She began to walk the decks with some such retinue about her and waved to John every time they passed his steamer-chair. She went down shuddery stairs through sickening odors

into the bowels of this monster and stared in fear and compassion at demons in human shape heaving, sweating in their special hell. She passed into the steerage and picked her timid way through sprawling tangles of humanity returning in stench and filth to European hovels. What had these awful people learned from America? What had America done for them? She saw a grimy, half-naked urchin urinating against a stanchion. She turned hastily and begged her friends to take her out—it was too disgusting!

She was introduced to the game of bridge by the congressman from Utah and the whisky-manufacturer and the congressman's wife, and won twenty-two cents the very first time she really played a regular game. She was introduced to the captain. Then she began to perk up generally. How could a Mormon from Utah be a congressman in Washington and be on his way to Europe with *a* wife—and such a wife! Aunt Pru had given her a different idea of Mormons. John's answer was unsatisfactory—as usual. Probably he wasn't a Mormon.

The night before they landed in Bremen she played the Liebestraum to the assembled first-class passengers. The picture of this little lady seated at the piano with that silvery halo about her girlish face, her slim, white shoulders marred only by the narrow strip of Nile green evening-gown, with those royal jade earrings which John had given her for her thirtieth birthday dangling from half-hidden ears was one that aroused a disturbance in the mind not only of the whisky manufacturer. John listened smilingly to the applause, the exclamations of those around him. A great pride deadened the ache below his ribs.

Evelyn would have preferred to be on her way to England —dear old England, mother of—all sorts of things. Or to France, land of sunshine and effervescence, from which by some queer anomaly her old Huguenot ancestor had sprung. Sometimes she still felt very Frenchy. London—Paris! Names to conjure with. Instead, they were headed for Bremen. Bremerhafen, the enormous captain called it. How she would have burbled French! It would all have come

back to her so quickly. Instead, she already heard around her the first low rumblings of that jargon which always sounded to her as if people were gargling their throats.

However; the Rhine!—The Rhine, at any rate, flowed through Germany! Wagner!—Lohengrin; Siegfried; The Nibelungs. That was the first thing she and John had read together in the springtime of their marriage.

And now John told her they wouldn't even see the Rhine. They were on their way direct to Carlsbad, which lay in the opposite direction. Opposite to what? Well; it lay east of Germany, not west. It was a town of Bohemia which belonged to Austria. But couldn't they just look at the Rhine and—and—what was he getting so cross about? She was only fooling. She studied intently the map of Europe spread across their two laps.

Allen kept teasing to see a castle. He wanted to know how a knight buttoned on his iron coat, because he couldn't button it, could he? And what did he have to do with a letter-carrier?

Arguments, arguments, arguments. Everybody always angry. They looked and sounded, at any rate, as if they were. John certainly was—most of the time. He was irritable, impatient, getting into furious quarrels about baggage and other things in a hideous jabber with insolent people in uniforms. The two maids were always being knocked about because they stood in people's way, were always hunting things lost in various pieces of baggage. The children were in constant danger.

At Carlsbad, a hotel crowded with grotesques. Quaint streets cluttered with diabetics, jaundiced invalids. Symphony concerts in the kur-gardens. Lovely hills over which she longed to wander alone. Two men with ferocious beards shouting at each other in a doorway. John said they were Czechs. One of them held a child bleeding from a cut in its forehead. What were Czechs? Czechs lived in Bohemia. There were lots of 'em in America. Out in the coal-mines.

Three weeks for John's cure, which stretched into five and upset their whole travel schedule. And so to Munich. Bai-

reuth was but a stone's throw from Munich! Shrine in the temple of Music! Rosemary Hall. She wondered if Miss Conklin was alive. Probably. Probably still there in her funny little brown-velvet dress. They had no time to go to Baireuth. Nothing there anyway. It was closed. Immeasurable beer-halls where Evelyn kept begging John not to undo all the good that Carlsbad had done for him. John reveled in Munich. He pointed out to Evelyn a hundred familiar places. Cafés, parks, dance-halls. Two hours in an enormous picture-gallery. The public rooms of a palace through which Allen and Jane—and Evelyn too—tiptoed in awe.

Through car-windows she saw quaint, colorful towns, adorable farmhouses, wooded hills crowned by castles, some of them in ruin. She saw things only from the outside, obscured by family, by distance and speed. How she longed to be alone! To be able to live and loaf and see and enjoy! She felt vaguely about her that for which she blindly groped. It was there—just beyond her reach—as always. She felt faintly stirring within her the old longing for knowledge, for understanding.

After Munich, the Tyrol, Switzerland, the north of France —Paris! Paris for three days and two nights. Then Cherbourg—and Brooklyn.

John had been away from his business too long. He was again in robust health. He was restless, eager to be back. Almost equally so was Evelyn. But the trip, for her, had been anything but a rest.

A confused jumble of fleeting impressions—most of them false, and uncorrected—which had roused in her an acute nostalgia. In one sense she had felt a sharp mental stimulus. In another she had felt a dull disillusion. Women shoveling manure from carts. A live prince at an adjoining table. Grandeur, discomfort. Flights of human genius, depths of hopeless misery. Each from a distance; each through a veil! She longed for home and the unobtrusive comfort of her bedroom and bath. Once, as their train stood at a station, she saw a regiment of German soldiers marching past. She

thought of Kurt Schelling, wondered where he was, thought of how changed was her life from what she had once thought it might be.

She had become strangely apathetic. Her relations with her husband were those of an old married couple. She had looked at her gray hair in the mirrors of palaces and felt old, bare, with the age and the emptiness that surrounded her. She had not had a passionate moment with her husband in months and months—nor without him. She felt no passion. She felt no need, no hunger. She was kind to John. She was only impatient, not irritable, with her children.

Evelyn was glad to be back home; glad to have Allen and Jane settled once more in the routine of school, to have little John where she could try, at least, to correct his fretfulness, glad to wander about her beautiful home; glad to see familiar people with whom she could talk in common terms, glad to read the New York Times in the morning and the Brooklyn Eagle at night. So one day drifted into the next and Evelyn slipped along with them, speaking now and then to her friends and family of the cultural advantages and the physical discomforts of European travel, until, at length, the whole episode stood woven inconspicuously into the ever-fading tapestry of her past.

Evelyn, herself, thought neither of the direction nor of the fact of her drift. She never admitted to herself that what she called her baby's fretfulness was one obvious indication of both. Her attitude toward this youngest of her three children was one which she never attempted to analyze. He remained for her a never-faced problem. She acknowledged, in a general way, that all her system with Allen and Jane had, in John's case, gone to pot. She made excuses to herself that it was because little John himself was "so different." Alternately she petted and scolded him absurdly; alternately he would kick and scream in paroxysms of rage, then crawl to Evelyn's lap and fling his arms about her neck in equally passionate remorse. In one moment he was a thoroughly disagreeable little devil; in the next a pathetically love-hungry child—but always passionate, self-willed, given to the oddest

twists of imagination. Ten-year-old Allen detested him; of little Jane he made a martyr. He had a great fear of his father who one minute tried awkwardly to win his favor and the next shouted at him in anger. Once during an argument John accused Evelyn of making his namesake pay for a deep-seated grudge against himself.

To humor Evelyn the doctor prescribed various meaningless changes of diet for the child. Evelyn had been obliged to change maids three times within the last year. They simply couldn't stand it. Evelyn became convinced that all maids were equally impossible. But the shifting of maids and the shifting of theories resulted in no change in the problem itself.

In the meantime her country had declared war on Spain and Evelyn began trying to find out from John and The Literary Digest what it was all about. She heard, or read, about butcheries of Cuban patriots and ancient atrocities in the Philippines. She read of how Teddy Roosevelt, like any knight of old, was collecting his Rough Riders in Texas. She stared in fascination at a Sunday-supplement colored sketch of what one twelve-inch shell from Cervera's fleet could do in the way of damage to banks, business, human beings and architecture if it landed, for example, at the corner of Wall Street and Nassau. She tacked a combination-map of the Caribbean Sea and southern Pacific on the wall of the library. John stuck pins into it to mark the triumphant march of sweetness and light into those fever-infested, last lurking-places of Spanish tyranny.

There was another good thing about the war. It jumped the price of leather. John, himself, was jumping back and forth between Washington and New York and told Evelyn of lunches with this politician and that and what the liberation of Cuba would mean to the Ferris Shoe Company. Evelyn clapped her hands and said it was too wonderful! Then she read all about the rascals who were selling bad meat to soldiers. John tried to make Evelyn understand the exact difference between honest, legitimate business and war-profiteering.

Allen knew the names, speed and gunnage of all our battle-

ships and cruisers as well as he did the players on the New York and Brooklyn baseball teams. It was Anna who bore the brunt of Allen's statistics. Whether it was from too much statistics, or too much baby John, or from the psychological effect of war in general Anna had changed of late. Evelyn only gradually woke up to the fact. Evelyn would never have believed it possible had she not seen a dozen evidences of Anna's neglect, her restlessness. At times Anna was even irritable with the children. So Evelyn talked to her sharply; then soberly. And Anna only said "Yes, ma'am" and "No, ma'am" until tears welled into her round blue eyes and she begged Evelyn to let her go away for a month; for only just one single month's vacation, and then she would surely come back again all right. She said the general confusion was too much for her. What confusion? She needed a rest. Well. That was reasonable. So did Evelyn.

Precisely at this juncture, as if to prove all Evelyn's theories, little John had an attack of vomiting, developed a fever, and at length forced even big John's admission that the boy was obviously ill. Obviously, also, according to Evelyn, the baby's illness put Anna's plan for a month's vacation quite out of the picture. When Evelyn spoke of loyalty, gratitude, friendship and Anna's love for little John who wanted no one near him but Anna Menosky, the girl tearfully promised to put all thought of a holiday out of her head until things settled back to normal. Week after week passed by without any signs of such a return. In the meantime Anna became gradually more and more restless; less and less satisfactory. Evelyn was completely at a loss to account for the change that had come over faithful Anna Menosky.

During all these months of war Evelyn only once mentioned the name of Kurt Schelling to John. But she looked for it now and then in the newspapers. She also made inquiries. Kurt's father was now a judge of the state supreme court. Clara was a teacher of English in one of the city high schools. That's all her grandiose plans had amounted to! One morning Evelyn called up this school and felt vaguely excited as she held the receiver while some one went

to call Miss Schelling to the 'phone. She heard Clara's voice!

Kurt had been made a captain after the battle of Manila. He was still in the Philippines. Clara thought he would probably be decorated for bravery. Evelyn's eyes glistened as she held the receiver to her ear.

Thereafter Cuba faded into the background of Evelyn's war interest. She barely glanced at the headlines about San Juan Hill and Teddy's apotheosis. For that same front page of the New York Times brought the shock of war to Evelyn —the sense of war's awfulness and war's glory. It stood in the lower left corner. John hadn't even noticed it while eating his eggs and toast although the paper had stood for twenty minutes propped up against the water bottle in front of him. He was in a hurry that morning to catch a train to Washington. Evelyn saw it staring at her, impossibly.

Captain Kurt M. Schelling.

A skirmish with natives near a jungle-town for which Evelyn searched in vain on her war-map through a blur of tears.

Killed!

She went over to the telephone. She didn't take it down. She went back to her chair and gazed through the trees of the park to things far, far away in space and time.

She did not go with John and Allen to witness the triumph of Dewey's return. She stayed at home and thought of a dead hero lying somewhere in a temporary grave in a land of savages and pestilential swamps. She had written a very long letter to Clara. Clara's reply had spoken of "days of hallowed memory" and how Clara looked forward to seeing again her dearly-beloved and never-forgotten girlhood friend. But Evelyn did not carry out her promise of visiting the Schellings. Instead, she had Clara over one night for dinner. And Evelyn tried not to show her dismay as she greeted this scrawny, red-haired, old-maid school-teacher in her parlor. She never saw Clara again after that.

But now the spirit of Kurt came back and dwelt with her and became for her an ideal, and went with her, now dim, now bright, down through the years of her life.

Her hero-lover.

On that evening of Clara's visit the sight of her old girl-friend was not the only shock which Evelyn received. There was another in store for her.

Nothing had gone right. The dinner was bad. Anna had been in one of her stupid glooms all afternoon. Allen had slapped little John's face for upsetting the whole cardboard fleet which Allen had left in battle-formation before going down to supper. Poor little John was still howling when Clara arrived. It was a gloomy meal. They talked about Kurt and of the years that lay between them. Lucky thing that John was in Washington. He would have been bored to death. When, at length, Clara had gone Evelyn went up for a last look at the baby before going to bed.

As she switched on the light in the upper hall she saw Anna coming out of the bathroom in her nightgown and questioned her about John. Anna acted queerly. Evelyn demanded of her rather sharply what had gotten into her. Anna didn't reply. She started past Evelyn to her room at the end of the hall. Then suddenly, Evelyn noticed something which at the moment seemed so incredible that had she been blind she never could have believed it possible. She put out her hand. Her voice sounded queer in her own ears.

"What's the matter with you, Anna?" The girl shook her head and tried to hurry past, but Evelyn's arm barred the way. "I want to look at you." Anna twisted away from her. Evelyn caught her nightgown. "Anna!"

Then Anna burst into tears.

"Let me go! Let me go!"

And ran weeping into her room. Evelyn followed. She stood in the gloom before Anna's bed and listened to the girl's convulsive sobbing. Then she turned on the light. She bent over her faithful little maid and her voice was very, very gentle.

"Anna, dear. You must talk to me. Don't be frightened. I want you to talk to me. I want you to tell me how in the world—what has happened. Sit up. Be sensible."

Evelyn put her arms about Anna and forced her into a

sitting posture. As she did so she felt the unmistakable fullness of Anna's body. Anna buried her face in her mistress' lap.

"I want to go away!" she kept moaning.

"You want to do nothing of the kind."

"If you had let me go—no one would have known—I'd have—and now it's too late—"

"Anna! Sit up. I want you tell me exactly what has happened."

Then Anna told her. Evelyn listened to her garbled story in a kind of fascinated horror. It was the carpenter. This Henry whom John had kept on after the house was finished to tinker with doors and shelves and various odds and ends. John had called Henry the handiest workman he had seen in a dog's age. A gentlemanly sort of fellow for a laborer. Evelyn, too, had taken a fancy to him. And, now, it seemed so had Anna, in her own way. Henry hadn't confined himself to carpentry.

Ever since they had come back from Europe Anna had been meeting Henry every three or four days, or rather nights—sometimes it was days. Henry was married. Had two children. Had been out of work for two months. Sometimes drank a drop too much. Wanted to go to Cuba and fight Spaniards. Evelyn scarcely heard Anna's mumbled confession.

She stared down at the straw-colored back of Anna's head. An indignation that was in large part disgust struggled with a profound pity for this girl who had committed so frightful a blunder. The association was too intimate, too inevitable.

To Anna Menosky, the loyalty of her mistress during this crisis was the act of an angel. If Anna had been devoted before, she worshiped her mistress now.

Evelyn did not tell John immediately of Anna's condition. She debated the matter with herself a long time before she told him. When, at length, she had to do so she led him to it very cunningly. He didn't reproach her. He did call the whole thing a rotten mess in which Evelyn ought never to have allowed herself to be mixed. But he only grunted when Evelyn told him about the room she had found for Anna and her baby and showed him receipted bills for Anna's hospital

expenses and for all the things she had bought for the baby. In fact, he secretly admired the way Evelyn went about the whole thing. Her efficiency surprised him.

As for this god-dam' rascal that had put Anna into this hole, John spent half a day hunting him down, gave him a tongue-lacing that he'd remember for some time to come and ended by getting the bum a job through Tommy Dixon, just to wind up the thing and be able to forget it. But he never told Evelyn about this.

The whole thing amused John somewhat. He would have been more amused if the incident had had a less unpleasant effect on Evelyn and his household generally. What with war and the constant shifting of maids and the baby's illness and one thing after another Evelyn herself showed unmistakable signs of strain. She had lost weight, suffered greatly from headaches and her old insomnia, had no appetite to speak of. John urged her to accept Edna's invitation to go south for a complete change and rest. At length Evelyn allowed herself to be persuaded.

Just after her twelfth wedding-anniversary in December Evelyn, with little John and a new governess, joined Edna at Palm Beach and ranged on the glass shelf of her bathroom the various tonics, lotions, sedatives and mechanical appliances indicated in such cases by family physicians and up-to-date druggists.

She had drifted into pretty nearly complete stagnation. Her life had become a practically aimless and useless existence. She idled in bed. She idled on the beach. She idled on porches. At times, as she sat on the beach beneath her white and black striped parasol and gazed out over that sleepy sea, the vision would come to her of an island of coral, shaded with palms, and of her Grandmother Jane—but very faintly now, rousing no emotion. Then she would glance at her little jeweled watch and idle back to the hotel where Edna and a couple of other ladies and idle gentlemen would be waiting, now, for their game of bridge.

She wrote letters to John, asking questions about Allen and Jane and reporting their baby's progress. In reality she paid

no attention to the child. The hotel-physician was of the opinion that nothing serious ailed him. He needed iron and appetite. So did Evelyn.

The hotel physician also treated Evelyn. Grapefruit was prescribed. And rest.

Evelyn's rest was doing her no good. She wrote John that she was homesick. She wasn't. She didn't long for anything. She felt only a vague, but very inclusive discontent.

Then the baby had a chill on the beach and Evelyn in a panic telegraphed for John. By the time John arrived the child was sitting up in bed playing with a cardboard chicken-farm. A little thinner, his tan a kind of greenish film, his big gray eyes solemnly staring from their sockets. Evelyn declared that she had lost confidence in this hotel-physician. She wanted Dr. Ogilvie's advice. She insisted on going home. So they went.

On their way home John told Evelyn that it was time for him to put his foot down on all this fiddling. She meant all right and all that, but he'd stood for this old fog-head of an Ogilvie long enough. He wanted Dr. Henderson to take the baby in hand. Evelyn, frightened by John's gloom, said she had no objection. She only wanted some one to make her baby well and strong—like Allen. Then Evelyn camouflaged an attack of sniffles by powdering her nose while John went into the smoking-compartment and discussed with other husbands the idea of grooming Teddy Roosevelt for the presidential sweepstakes.

In consequence, Dr. Henderson called on his new patient the day after Evelyn's arrival home and found a problem facing him very different from what he had anticipated. He had never been in John's new home, had never seen John's youngest son, had not seen Mrs. Ferris for years. He had formed a distinctly unfavorable prejudice against this wife of his old college-chum. A pretty little thing who wore her clothes well, played the piano similarly, and otherwise displayed no great amount of mentality.

When he looked at the hall-clock on his way downstairs after that first call he was in a decidedly unpleasant frame of

mind. It was not from worry over the youngster's condition. It was from annoyance over the mother's. He could still see her gray eyes fastened on his in a kind of puzzled wonder. Behind her slow, frank replies to his questions, her timid self-defense, he saw the emptiness of her life. What had she meant by her silly statement about her baby's illness being her punishment? Punishment for what? What the devil had started him talking?

He had called her directly, or by implication, idle, vain, selfish, shallow; had scoffed at her sleeplessness, poohed her pains, her lack of appetite. He shook his head and shoulders in self-disgust. Who was he to sit for two hours and harangue a woman who had a perfect right to live her own life as she saw fit? None of his business. He had all but insulted her.

To-morrow he'd explain. He had two new patients. When she had mentioned medicine, he had sneered. Well, she didn't need medicine. She needed life. If some one didn't take her in hand she was on the highroad to a neurosis. She was a typical—what? It was certainly not a type over which he was getting so wrought up.

As for Evelyn, she sat by her baby's bed a long time after Dr. Henderson had left and tried to remember the things he had said. The effect of Dr. Henderson's scolding was not at all what he nervously feared. It was to Evelyn what a cold shower is to one awaking in a hot, stuffy room. His words had stung, but not unpleasantly. She would have liked more. She looked forward to his coming again the following afternoon. She thought, now, of lots of things she could have said in self-defense, but she had been afraid to talk plainly. Why hadn't she had this man as her physician years ago?

When John came home that evening she talked to him of Dr. Henderson with an enthusiasm that filled her husband with a peculiar pleasure. She was sure now that the baby would be properly cared for. She hadn't felt so hopeful in a long time. She told John how Dr. Henderson had scolded her. John grinned.

"Haven't I told you for the last ten years he was a regular fellow?"

"I never realized it. I don't know why. I'm sorry. But it isn't too late." An anxious note crept into her voice. "It's not too late, is it?"

15

It was not too late. It was not too late by seven years. And throughout these seven years neither John Ferris, nor Dr. Henderson, nor Evelyn, herself, ever really understood what underlay Evelyn's relations with her family physician.

John thought he understood. Dr. Henderson thought he understood. Many men have thought that they have understood the woman who has become the matrix of their most self-conscious acts. Dr. Henderson was a gentleman as well as a physician. On the whole he accepted the duties which life imposes and those conventions on which, in Brooklyn society, life is framed, as a gentleman and a physician is supposed to accept them. He made of this incipient neurasthenic a woman pretty thoroughly reconciled to her responsibilities as wife and mother—those common-consent responsibilities of a fairly regular and commendable Brooklyn wife and mother. He thought he had reason to believe that his influence over Evelyn was a healthful and a steadying one. Did she not tell him so a thousand times?

Evelyn, also, believed that she understood. Her affair with Dr. Henderson developed neither precipitately nor far—save, perhaps, as measured in terms of Brooklyn standards of speed and propriety. They saw each other almost daily. During the first year of their friendship the illness of her baby formed the obvious link between them. Together they worked loyally to save little John to an indifferent world. The two families became very intimate. Dr. Henderson's youngest two children played with Allen and Jane. Mrs. Henderson became Matilda and Mrs. Ferris, Evelyn. Together they went to lectures and symphony concerts at the Brooklyn Institute. Matilda and Evelyn attended Henry Doyle's winter-courses on "Cross-currents in Modern Literature." Matilda interested Evelyn in Red Cross work and Evelyn proposed Matilda's

name at the Brooklyn Woman's Club. Dr. Henderson interested them both in the Free Kindergarten Society and Evelyn discovered her latent talent for committee work and teas-with-a-purpose.

John took them all to the races, weather and patients permitting, in the Renault limousine which he had given Evelyn on her thirty-third birthday. Now, instead of five-hundred with the Dixons, the Ferrises spent an evening a week at bridge with the Hendersons in the Ferris library. But since Dr. Henderson so frequently upset their plans for a quiet game by being called out, or detained by inconvenient crises in unknown patients, it came to be a fixed custom to have Bess Dixon, who played a snappy game, as fifth in these bridge parties.

Tommy had never learned to play bridge. Sometimes he would call for his wife toward the end of the evening and have a highball or two with them all. Tommy had made a lot of money in South Brooklyn real estate. They were talking of running him for Congress. He was a Republican. Tommy's Republicanism was his most pronounced characteristic. When Tommy didn't come John would see Bess home. Evelyn knew perfectly well that it didn't take one-half as much time as John claimed it did to go to the Dixons' and back. Once in a while John would stay an hour or two and say, on his return, that he had been discussing a business-matter with Tommy. Evelyn never questioned him.

Evelyn's moments alone with Dr. Henderson were very rare. Therefore, perhaps, they continued to recur. A half-hour in the afternoon with the maids about and the children liable to romp in at any minute. A half-hour's drive in her car, or his car, through and beyond the park. A very infrequent hour alone with him out of the world of everyday. She was never at ease at such times. He was scarcely more so. Beneath his kisses she wondered what her children were doing, what excuse she would give John if he should begin to question her. When she was trying hardest to forget Dr. Henderson would sigh and pull out his watch—always overdue at some patient's house, or at his hospital. Even in her rare

moments of passion she never lost sight of the surrounding facts of her situation, of practical considerations. She was always afraid; always begging for caution.

In these hours of intimacy Dr. Henderson was conscious, always, not only of Evelyn's physical self-restraint which took this form of extreme nervousness, but also of her spiritual reserve through which he sensed depths never penetrated by his love for her. He never, for example, learned what Evelyn had meant when she had said that her baby's illness was her punishment—unless the vague generalities with which she answered his questions were all that she had felt at the time. Yet something told him perfectly plainly that she was neither as simple nor as superficial as her answers would imply.

Once only did he feel that he was very close to Evelyn's soul. It was on the afternoon of her baby's death. It was nearly eighteen months after his first talk with her by the side of this same child's bed. To Dr. Henderson her grief seemed a terrible thing. It did not materialize in tears, or outcry. It seemed to have thickened her blood and deadened her senses and to have made of her face a mask behind which she sat alone and unapproachable. For seventy hours they had fought, together, a hopeless fight. It was over.

John was also there. In the dead silence he went to Evelyn who sat by the window staring out over the trees of the park. Very gently he put his hand on her head. She did not look up. She did not move. He mumbled a word of comfort, of tenderness. She did not reply. Dr. Henderson motioned to the nurse and moved quietly to the door. In the doorway he looked back. The effect of the sunlight tangled in Evelyn's mass of silvery hair struck Dr. Henderson with startling vividness.

Something made her turn her head and look at him. John put his arm about her. She went to the side of the bed with her husband and looked down at the face of her dead boy. No tears came. Yet Dr. Henderson, as he closed the door behind him, felt that never before had he realized a woman's capability for enduring, never before had he understood the depth and difference of a woman's grief. In that instant he

believed he had a glimpse into Evelyn's innermost soul. But he never knew how far essential truth, in this case, lay beneath apparent facts.

Nor did John, watching Evelyn's stony grief at the loss of their youngest child, and respecting it, see in it a final expiation for a long past sin.

The death of this child marked the beginning of a profound change in Evelyn. Not the fact of his death itself, but that whole chain of cause and effect, closely interlocked, of which it formed the climax, profoundly affected her. The change was not immediately apparent except as others saw in her a quite understandable sadness. It did not come suddenly. But it mellowed her and sweetened her. It ripened her into a woman who has learned to think as well as to feel and act. Little by little this change spread through all her relations to life. Little by little her deep-lying selfishness, which had been none the less real for having been to a large extent unconscious, disintegrated.

There were other factors, also, involved in this process, many of which she wholly ignored when, at a later time, she thought back on those years. For there was one factor which, for her, overshadowed all others and dominated this whole period of her life. It was the illness of her husband which began a year after little John's death with a sharp upflaring of his old malady and dragged its course with periods of respite which grew gradually shorter through five, leaden years. For five years Evelyn lived the life of a trained nurse on more or less constant duty.

It did not embitter her. On the contrary, it lent her the support of a definite purpose, the pleasure of knowing herself to be of practical use in the world. She went at her problem courageously. She took pride in her ceaseless care of him. She showed a tireless energy which at first amazed John and humbled him and which later he took for granted. When his pain made him irritable he was merciless to her for days and nights on end. At other times he was extraordinarily gentle. They had never been closer than they were during some of these rest periods in John's illness.

Through these years ran her friendship with Dr. Henderson like a creek through a desert. To him she looked for advice at every turn—and always received pretty much what she looked for. With him she shared by far the most of her hours of relaxation. She learned to look at life and art more or less in terms of his own not-penetrating, but kindly and on the whole healthy vision. She learned much from him. If her admiration for his wisdom and courage was a little too all-inclusive it at any rate gave her a sure and steady hold on life and the will to carry on.

And so these years which others who best knew her looked on as years of a kind of martyrdom for her passed, in fact, not unpleasantly. It was a period of stagnation. But a period of stagnation provided it terminate and affect only externals is precisely what is favorable to the germination of life.

In the spring of 1905 John wished to try once more the springs of Carlsbad. For the first time in years the circumstances were favorable. Allen would enter Yale in the fall and would be, this summer, at a summer-camp to get some needed coaching for his entrance examinations. Jane had been invited by her Aunt Edith to come at the end of her school year in Adelphi to spend the summer with the Marshalls at a Lake Michigan resort. Two years before this Jane's cousin Gloria Marshall had married the son of a Wisconsin lumberman. None of them had gone to the wedding. Edith's twenty-year-old daughter had become a complete stranger to her Brooklyn relatives. Evelyn had not seen her sister in years. She had lost all but casual interest in Edith's affairs.

So Evelyn was free to go with her husband. Yet she postponed from day to day final arrangements for the trip. The fact is she was afraid to go, afraid to cut herself off from supports that seemed necessary, afraid to shake herself out of this rut of habit and daily routine that held her now so firmly. She did not give this as her reason. She had many others. John needed Dr. Henderson's care and skill. John needed the quiet and comfort of his home. John needed this and needed that. An ocean-trip might precipitate an acute attack. Travel was dangerous for a man in his condition. She finally

proposed their going to the Virginia Hot Springs for a month before undertaking the longer trip to Carlsbad. John consented.

There his condition became acute and Evelyn was again convinced of her infallible premonitions. She wished to telegraph for Dr. Henderson. John stubbornly insisted on going home. It was a mistake, he growled, to have come to this imitation health-resort. Evelyn wired Dr. Henderson to meet them on their arrival in Brooklyn and started north with her husband. It was the first of July. The tiny drawing-room of their Pullman was insufferably hot. All through the long, dreary night and day John grumbled and grunted and panted in pain and disgust at fate. They arrived at the Pennsylvania terminal in the early evening.

Dr. Henderson was not at the station to meet them. When Evelyn had gotten John home and in bed she telephoned to the doctor's house and found that he had gone to the country for a week with his family; that the housemaid had not forwarded her telegram. She put in a call for him with the long-distance operator. Her two maids were off on a month's holiday. She sent a messenger to Anna Menosky asking her to come as soon as possible to help her through this emergency. Anna could have her old room and could bring her boy with her. The messenger returned in an hour with word that Anna would be there in the morning. Anna never failed her.

Evelyn sat in the dimly lighted room by the side of her husband's bed. She listened to his heavy, pain-clogged breathing. She was not frightened. She had lived through hours similar to these often enough in the past five years. She had long since given up thinking about the future. She felt only pity for her husband's suffering and a great emptiness within her own soul. She wondered whether she ought to telegraph the children about her sudden change of plans. She decided to wait until Dr. Henderson came. She did not wish to worry them unnecessarily. They could not help her. She did not need help. She knew Dr. Henderson would come to John immediately. In the meantime he would tell her what to do. She knew what to do. There was practically nothing she

could do. Only little things to make him less uncomfortable; only patience. It had been so, now, for years. These years seemed like a night disturbed by dreams. Here a fragment, there a fragment, vaguely connected, inconsequential; great gaps bridged in a single instant.

"What are you thinking about?"

She glanced up startled. John's great, puffed eyes were staring at her disgustedly.

"Nothing."

"Why the hell do you sit there with such a damn funeral face? It gives me the willies to watch you."

He turned over laboriously. She rose and rearranged the covers.

"Don't be foolish, dear."

"You don't have to stay here. I'm all right. Go on about your business."

"If my staying here annoys you—" she stopped. She knew that this petulance was only the result of his immense discomfort. He had talked like this thousands of times. It didn't mean anything.

"I want one thing understood," he grumbled, "I don't want that boy of Anna Menosky's here."

He must have overheard her talking with the messenger-boy about Anna's coming in the morning.

"I need Anna's help, John. She can't leave the boy alone. I'll see that he stays upstairs and doesn't—"

"I don't want the god-damned brat in the house, I tell you!" She did not answer him. She had long learned the unwisdom of that. She stared gloomily at the great black dome of his head. She was baffled by this problem of his unreasonableness. Probably she could get the boy upstairs without John's ever knowing it. He was a timid youngster, quiet as a mouse, whose presence in the big house her husband probably never would suspect. Why was he like this? "Why don't you talk with that central? They've forgotten all about your call. It's an hour—"

"All right," she said cheerfully, and went downstairs to the telephone.

Central said that a messenger had been sent for Dr. Henderson who was calling at a friend's house with no telephone connection. She came back to tell John. He only grunted.

"I want Johnson to come here in the morning."

Johnson was John's lawyer. Evelyn remembered the first night she had met him, years before. Ever since that night she had disliked and distrusted him.

"Why bother—"

"Don't for God's sake always say why! Do you ever bother about anything? I've got a dozen things to settle with him. I'm going to Carlsbad whether you like it, or lump it. I'm going to go where I can get over this god-damned, lousy disease, I tell you. I'm going to go where I can get properly treated. All I want is for Henderson to get me in shape for the trip. He doesn't care a continental damn about me either. I know what it's all about. All he gives a damn about is—"

"Listen, dear, please don't get yourself all excited over nothing whatever. To-morrow he'll be here and—"

"To-morrow!—Christ! To-morrow!—He's one hell of a doctor!"

She could hear the bell of the telephone from the booth off the library.

"That's the doctor, now."

She left the room and started downstairs. She heard John calling.

"Evelyn!"

"Yes, dear."

"Come here a minute."

"But let me first—"

"Damn it! Come here a minute!"

She went back.

"Is there anything—?"

He had half risen from the pillow.

"I want you to tell Henderson to come here at once."

"But of course I will tell him—"

"Not to-morrow; not next week. Get in his car and come in—now!"

"But John, isn't that a little—?"

"It doesn't matter what it is."

The telephone bell kept ringing.

"Very well!"

John sank back on his bed.

"It's got nothing to do with my being sick or being well. I want him to do it out of friendship. Do you understand?"

"Certainly. I know he'll do anything—"

John sneered. Again she hurried out. The bell was jangling. And again she heard John.

"Do you hear, Evelyn?" She did not answer. "Evelyn!"

"Yes! For heaven's sake, if you don't let me go we won't get him at all!"

"I want him to come—to-night!"

"Oh, don't be so silly!" she exclaimed. "You don't have to tell me a dozen times—" She stopped. There was no use finishing. She shook her head and hurried downstairs.

She closed the door of the booth behind her. Doing so, she shut out, for a moment, the world from herself and her one unfailing friend. She heard his voice. As always a great relief, a great calmness settled over her. She drew her strength from these low, quiet tones, her courage from his certainty. She felt no distance between them. He was there, as always.

She told him of John's turn for the worse, their trip, of how she had followed his instructions. She told him of John's fretfulness. Dr. Henderson asked questions. Evelyn said she had brought all John's charts for the doctor to examine. Only a slight up-curve for temperature. His heart? Perfectly normal as far as she knew. It was the heat more than anything. It was his constant fretting, his impatience. If only—then she gave him John's request about coming immediately.

"I hate to ask you to do this."

"Do you think I ought to come?"

"I don't know what to say. I honestly think it's a whim. And yet—It's a terrible imposition to ask you to leave all your—"

"Listen, Eve. I'll do precisely what you wish me to do."

For a moment she was silent.

"I think it would comfort him, if he thought—"

"I'll come."

"Thank you, dear," she said in a low tone which made clear the nature of her gratitude. "I'll tell him."

"Tell him what you wish. You know why I am coming. I'll leave here inside of an hour. With luck I should be there by daybreak—or shortly after."

"Come directly to the house. I'll have breakfast with you."

"Good. Tell me about yourself."

"There's nothing to say. I'm quite all right."

"I want you to call a nurse. Wait a minute. I'll give you her address."

"There's no need—"

"I insist on your getting some rest. I want you to promise me."

"I honestly—"

"Take this number. Tell them to send you either Miss McGovern, or Miss Pierce, at once. Will you do this?"

"If you—"

"I do. It's far more important for you to have your rest and strength than— At any rate, I insist."

They talked on for another minute or two before saying good-by. Then Evelyn called up the number which Dr. Henderson had given her. Miss McGovern would come at once. Evelyn came out of the booth and for a few minutes idled about the room. She did not want to go upstairs. She did not want to tell John about the nurse. He hated nurses. She would tell him, simply, that it was Dr. Henderson's orders. She was, in fact, dog-tired. Not sleepy. She was never sleepy when her nerves were in this state. She would take veronal to-night. She used it very sparingly now. Only when it was really necessary.

She went down to the cook to tell her about the various people who were coming. The cook was already in bed. Evelyn told her to keep Anna and her boy downstairs till she could talk with them. Mr. Ferris was not to be disturbed by

any noise. Dr. Henderson would be there for breakfast. She should have plenty of eggs and chops. Dr. Henderson would like popovers and one of her parsley omelets. Then she started upstairs again.

She stopped in the library. She sat for a moment in the big leather-chair by the oaken reading-table and closed her eyes. A moment's relaxation before going back to her—duty.

She thought of Allen, asleep, now, under his tent in the Maine woods. And of Jane—where would she be? Dancing, no doubt, in the ballroom of her hotel. She suddenly remembered that to-morrow would be the Fourth of July. Doctor Henderson had not mentioned this. A shame to bring him in on a holiday! To-morrow her father would march in the parade in Stamford. He still stood straight and walked firmly in that grand old uniform of blue and gold. Kurt Schelling. Her hero.

And she was here. She was glad she hadn't telegraphed the children. Why spoil their pleasure? Later she would tell them. They had their own lives to live—were just beginning to live. Seventeen. What had she done at seventeen?

She was old. Terribly old. Immeasurably, incalculably old. A trained nurse. At any rate she was faithful to her job. No one could deny that. So she would go on and on indefinitely—until at length he, too, died—or she. Then, in either case, she was finished. What was the sense of it all?

She thought she heard John stir upstairs. She rose slowly. She would tell him that Dr. Henderson would be there in the morning. Of course. For friendship's sake. She felt a faint thrill of pride. Had he ever failed her? Right now he was starting on his long, dark ride, alone. She wished she were with him. For an instant she wished she were anywhere but here, stranded like that old hulk of a schooner which used to lie on the shore where John's launch had its mooring. Foolish wish. Selfish. It wasn't a wish. She quickened her steps. Her news would comfort him. A wave of pity for him came over her. What did he have of life? Whose fault was it? At least she had her duty, her health.

She stopped at the door. It was a habit. Sometimes he

dropped off from sheer exhaustion in the midst of his pain and discomfort. She listened. He was asleep now—or perhaps not. She was never quite certain. At times he would lie like that, motionless, silent, for an hour. If she moved he would say something which showed that he had not been asleep at all.

She stood for a moment in the doorway and saw across the dimly lighted room that black shadow, deep-sunk in its pillow. If only he would sleep! She would get her night-dress and the veronal. Perhaps she could get a night's rest. She felt unspeakably weary. To-morrow she would have breakfast with him. She was tiptoeing noiselessly through the room toward her bath. To-morrow she would be alone with him—after months. A passionate longing for her lover stirred within her. Instinctively she glanced toward her husband.

She was at the foot of the bed. He had shifted position—or had he? He was staring at her. There was something terrible in those wide-open eyes, a nameless, fathomless reproach. She trembled. It was as if they saw through the very soul of her and beyond; as if she stood stripped of all subterfuge, all camouflage, to answer to him for every mistake she had ever committed, every fault, every sin. She stared back into those black, accusing eyes. And as she stared a terror swelling in from the outer confines of the universe slowly engulfed her. His heavy jaw hung down in what for a moment seemed a sardonic grin. But no; that was no grin. That was anything but a grin. She no longer trembled. She stood rigid; frozen; still. That stillness—the stillness of the gray, lifeless beach of a tideless sea when earth will have stopped its spinning—that stillness spoke to her.

Against an enormous pressure she lifted her foot; she stepped back, facing those staring eyes. Then, with a choked scream, she fled from the room, fled down the stairs through the hall into the lighted library and sank shuddering into the red-leather reading-chair.

As she did so the front door-bell jangled.

End of Part One

PART II

I

On an afternoon in early July of the year 1907 a man, bareheaded, in loosened shirt with rolled-up sleeves, strolled along the road terminating a mile farther on at the end of Shippan Point. He carried in his hand an opened letter which he had been reading. As a big touring-car swept up and past him the man heard the harsh grating of suddenly locked wheels and a shout from within a swirl of white dust.

"Hello, Prof!" The cloud thinned. The driver, who sat alone in the car, had turned in his seat and was grinning back. "What in the world are you doing here, Professor Ondricek?"

A smile lighted the man's face. A couple of weeks ago he had said good-by to this young fellow in his classroom at Yale. They had been discussing the boy's term-mark in mathematics. He had been one of six who had flunked the course. Ondricek had talked sharply; the more sharply because he liked the boy. He had been inexcusably lazy. He'd been spoiled by having everything handed to him on a silver platter. This kind of lackadaisical, devil-may-care attitude he'd have to forget if he was ever going to do anything worth a tinker's damn in the world. He'd certainly have to get over it if he wanted to get through this course in trigonometry.

The boy had grinned. His only comment had been:

"Gee! Mother'll raise the devil with me."

"She would if I had a chance to talk with her for fifteen minutes."

Then Ondricek, too, had grinned good-humoredly, had answered the boy's grip and wished him good-luck. Then he had put his papers under his arm and gone over to Professor Anderson's room in the biological laboratory where his

friend had coaxed Ondricek to spend a couple of weeks with him and his wife in their cottage on Shippan Point before going for the summer to his home in southern Illinois.

He stepped back into the road beside the car.

"Aren't there any speed-limits on this road?"

The boy laughed. "I passed the cop half a mile back." He vaulted over the side of the car to the road and shook Ondricek's hand. "I'm awfully glad to see you. Coming to the games this afternoon?"

"What games?"

"The Connecticut championships. Over at the club. I made the semi-finals this morning."

"Yes? I have scarcely looked at a paper for a week. Professor Anderson and I have been out in a rowboat in bathing-suits from morning till night."

"You with Professor Anderson? Gee, I wish I'd known that. We're at the hotel—down at the Point—my mother and sister and I."

"Um— Beautiful car, you have."

"Good old boat." The boy slapped its hood affectionately. "Good engine. Do you drive?"

"No."

"Was going to say I'd love to have you use it—that is—if you—"

"I don't!" Ondricek laughed. "If you had a horse, now—"

"I have! Or my sister has. A peach. My father was nuts on horses, too. He never liked to ride in this thing. Horses, and boats. If you really like to ride I wish you'd use Jane's horse. She'd—"

"No, no, no! I was only joking. Thank you just the same, Ferris. You're very generous."

"Maybe you'd enjoy the game this afternoon? I'd love to have you meet my mother. We're all going over together. I've talked to her a lot about you."

"Me?"

"Well, I mean—" Ferris hesitated a moment. He did not know how to explain, simply, the nature of his one conversation with his mother about his professor of mathematics.

It was when he had tried to explain the cause of his failure and had risen gallantly to the defense of Professor Ondricek against his mother's sudden, unreasoning antipathy.

"I mean I've told her about you and the mess I made and the little heart-to-heart you gave me. Mother said she'd like awfully much to meet you." He grinned. His mother had said just that. She would like to talk just fifteen minutes with this professor. She would like to have him explain why it was that her boy who had gotten through everything so beautifully at Andover—well, he had gotten through, hadn't he? If this professor was so wonderful certainly her boy was not stupid.— "They're waiting for me, now. I'm late. I met Gordon Bradley on the road and we got chewing the rag. Won't you come with us?"

"Oh—thank you.—Some other time. I'm not dressed—"

"That's nothing! What do you care? It'll be a good—that is, I'm going to try like the devil. We'll have plenty of time for a swim afterwards. Can't I coax you?"

The professor laughed. He had anticipated a quiet afternoon of loafing in his bathing-suit on the beach. But he enjoyed a good game of tennis. He had watched Allen Ferris play before. He had no real reason for refusing the invitation.

"Well. If you really—I have nothing in particular—"

"That's bully! Hop in!" And the boy started a stream of chatter that bubbled out uninterruptedly until the car came to a grinding stop before the entrance of the huge, new hotel.

Allen wanted the professor to understand that this was really a great pleasure for him. His Aunt Edna was stopping with them at the hotel. His father's sister. His mother had been born in Stamford. Had the professor ever heard of Grainger pianos? Nobody else! His grandfather used to make 'em before he went up the flue. Had the professor ever noticed an old brick building to the right of the road as you came into town from Greenwich? Used to be the old factory. Still there. They used it to store leather. His father had been in the leather business—and shoes. That's what he was going to do when he got out of college—if he

ever did! Make good shoes cheap. Bum ambition, what? Everybody had to do something. His dad used to have a dream about a chain of stores all over the country. His mother wanted him to go in for law, or medicine. What's the sense? He didn't have the brains. No use pretending. His mother was—you know. They're all alike. She was a peach. Full of pep. Just learning to dive from a spring-board. Did it pretty well—considering. What did the professor think of Christian Science? Well, he didn't either. His mother was fooling around with it. Not serious, you know. Sounded like bunco to him. This was Saturday. Well, Monday he was going at that dam' math. He'd promised his mother. He was going to bone two hours a day on it. On the level. There was a chap from Harvard at the hotel. Claimed to be a math-shark. He'd give him a try. His mother? Math? Gee! No. She'd gone in for music. Piano. Sort of ran in the family. They said she used to be pretty good. Then she got married. Good-night! But she could put it all over his sister. The director of the Boston Conservatory had said last winter when he had been at the house for dinner that if she would take herself seriously she could still—you know—lot o' hokum. She was going to start in again. Said she was. Probably she'd take it all out in talk. You couldn't tell. She wasn't like most of them.

"She's really got an awful lot of sense. Only where I'm concerned she's a little nuts. You couldn't convince her I'm such a dough-head. Here we are! Old boat's still got a kick in her, what?"

"You're a good driver."

Allen gave a pleased laugh.

"There they are—over in the corner. That's my sister waving."

The two went up the steps and along the broad piazza toward three ladies seated about a wicker table a little apart from other groups of summer-guests. A half-humorous smile lay on Ondricek's face as he glanced about him. All very new, very kitish-kitosh. The floor glistened with fresh varnish. The wicker furniture had said good-by to its factory

in the very recent past. A new lawn, broken by clumps of newly transplanted shrubbery, sloped gently to a narrow strip of beach where age began. From the porch one looked out over the harbor of Stamford past the white tower of its harbor-light to the open expanse of Long Island Sound. The perfect adaptation of these three women to their environment would have given his friend Anderson the same satisfaction he would feel at spotting a blue Mexican lizard in a sunny angle of a South Nevada limestone cliff; a theme for a lecture on the harmony of nature, on the fitness of a given species to its corresponding set of circumstances within the general scheme of things.

The youngest had obviously not yet topped the foothill of twenty. Obviously, also, she was a threat to the established order of things. At a later day when established order became much less established she could have been defined by a term in itself confusing. But as she sat there, restless, effervescent, colorful, she could not have been called a flapper. The flapper had not yet evolved. A threat, however, she undoubtedly was.

The oldest of the three was not a threat. She was an accomplished fact. Equally disturbing. Ondricek guessed her to be forty, or forty-five, or maybe fifty. She had, in fact, just scurried past her fifty-sixth marker without an instant's pause, or break in pace. Lines, all but invisible, in the suspicious glow of her cheeks. A slight, warning flabbiness underneath a naughty little chin. Her hair of a blackness which to no one would betray her secret, of which no one save herself and her maid knew the extent, or origin.

The third of this triad was a woman, who, passing through a drawing-room, or along a street, would draw with her glances as a moving ship pulls with it little whirls of agitated water. She had that attractiveness which is not the readily definable beauty of line and symmetry, which lay tangled, perhaps, in that mass of silver-gray hair framing a face in the glow and freshness of a woman in full flower; or in the limpid grayness of eyes arched by heavy dark-brown brows with which no face-doctor had ever tampered; or in curves

lurking about a sensitive mouth, curves which swiftly broke and formed when she talked, or smiled, or listened. An expressionful face, irregular in feature, full of shifting lights and shadows. Perhaps it was not her face that lent her her attraction, but the build of her neck and breast and shoulders, the ripe vigor of her body that spoke from every gesture, and the lightness of her gait.

There are women to whom on first sight one attributes all those qualities of which one wishes them to be possessed. There is no adjective to define this characteristic. One reads in the fleeting expressions of their faces experiences which only lie, unformed, in one's own imagination. One hears in the first tones of their voices notes which are but echoes against a sounding-board of unforgotten music of one's own past. These women possess an indefinable quality which has nothing to do, in itself, with beauty, but which sometimes, like a catalyst, exists with beauty to resolve it into familiar and usable constituents. Seeing for the first time such a woman one loses sight of age. One thinks not of years, but of days; not of time, in fact, but of possibility.

"Mother! I want you to meet Professor Ondricek. Professor; this is my mother."

Evelyn looked smilingly into his lean, freckled face with its tangle of wrinkles about eyes and mouth half open because he was grinning down at her in slight embarrassment.

"I am very happy to meet you," she said and withdrew her hand. His grip had been regardless of the rings she wore. "My sister-in-law, Miss Ferris. My daughter, Jane, Professor—I don't think I have your name correctly."

"Ondricek," laughed Allen. "On-dri-cek."

The professor also laughed, bowing in a somewhat stiff, jerky fashion to the other two ladies.

"I have a proper cause for grudge against my ancestors."

"I—I don't think so," said Evelyn, giving Jane a look. Evidently Jane did. She was giggling.

"I met prof on the road," explained Allen. "I've coaxed him to go to the game with us."

"That's very pleasant," said Evelyn with what struck On-

dricek as a total lack of cordiality. He had not overheard Jane's exclamation when she had first caught sight of them:

"Look, mother! There's Allen. Who the dickens has he got with him? I like his nerve, to keep us waiting like this and— Gee! He looks like a farmer on a holiday!"

Evelyn indicated a chair beside her. Ondricek thanked her and sat down. There was something pleasing about the man—in spite of his looks. A peculiar dent, or scar, over his left eye emphasized at this moment the humorous expression of his face. Above his rather high forehead a crop of stiff, reddish hair was combed back straight without a part in it.

"I've told you about Professor Ondricek, mother. Maybe you've forgotten. I hope I can call you a friend of mine, professor."

"I hope so," smiled Ondricek.

"Professor Ondricek, mother, is my professor of mathematics."

"Oh, gee!" mumbled Jane.

Evelyn tried to keep her vague feeling of indignation from betraying itself. She remembered, now, Allen's talk about this professor of mathematics.

"Mathematics!" groaned Edna. "What does it feel like to be a professor of mathematics?"

Ondricek grinned into those merry black eyes which had seen so much and made a gesture of helplessness.

"At present it feels rather—uncomfortable. You see, if you take any animal, or fish, like myself, for example—"

"Is a fish an animal?"

"I said 'or'—and suddenly flop it out of its natural habitat—"

"What is your natural—what do you call it?"

"You ask horrible questions!"

"Don't answer them," said Evelyn.

"Don't save him!" pleaded Allen.

"Please save me, Mrs. Ferris." He picked up a book from the wicker table. Jane indicated it with a gesture.

"Mother has gone in for higher thought this summer."

"Yes?"

The book was Waldo Trine's "In Tune with the Infinite." Jane held up both hands and waved them about.

"You know. Very high!"

"Don't be nonsensical, Jane."

"Well, haven't you?"

"If you'd do some thinking," said Allen, "once in a while—"

"Going to take it up in September. It's required freshman year at Smith. Two hours a week. You sit and think—"

"You'll die of the strain," said Allen.

"About what, for example?"

"Oh, you have different subjects each week. If you want I'll put you down—"

"Do! Third week in November."

"Can't! November's taken. I'm all booked up till January."

They rattled on, Evelyn taking little part. She hadn't realized that her boy and this professor were such friends; couldn't quite understand it under the circumstances. She had seen his name on the list of the faculty, had read the appended scholastic record from which a mental portrait had instantly taken shape in her mind. She had this habit of forming mental portraits. It was an essential part of her equipment for jumping to swift conclusions and "getting her ideas about things." He hadn't the slightest resemblance to his portrait. Acting boyish—or else—much younger than she had—what? Thirty—maybe thirty-one, or two.

She caught the glance of Professor Ondricek and smiled at him that smile which had developed during these two years of her widowhood. She had seen the same sort of thing in the eyes of forty others. She had spent much of her time with Edna since John had died. And where Edna was there men were also. She had learned all the conventional leads; played a fair game, enjoyed it—in a way. Enjoyed it just as she enjoyed life in general—mildly, sanely.

Two years since the shock of John's death had passed and she had awaked with a sense of enormous relief combating a sadness because of associations suddenly disrupted, of duties

that had ceased. Two years during which the realization that her time was her own to spend as she pleased had gradually roused in her old longings, old ambitions that had been all but smothered beneath accretions of habit as the wife of John Ferris. More and more frequently she had Jane's friends at the house. During school-vacation she entertained Allen's chums. She resolved to identify her interests with those of her children. For them she would live. They adored her.

Her old thirst for music came back. She began to play not merely to lessen monotony, but because of an awakening eagerness for work. She looked up new compositions, began practicing daily at a set hour. She subscribed to a course of homeopathic doses of psychology at the Brooklyn Institute. She began to read once more. She began to talk to people. She began to sleep better. She borrowed from Doctor Henderson a book called "Woman and Sex," marked up the margins with lines and question marks and relayed it to Edna, who read only the "cases" and said it was better than a novel. She argued heatedly with Edna about "Sister Carrie," who after going to sleep for three nights trying to wade through it gave it up as not merely disgusting, which was bad enough, but dreary, which was infinitely worse.

John's death had terminated her affair with Doctor Henderson. That is, it had marked the finish of anything approaching passionate relations between them. Evelyn never attempted to explain to herself the reason for this. It just did. What she said to him as well as to herself was that she must live very differently from now on because of her duty to her children. She told him that John's death had suddenly made her realize the falseness and the shallowness of all these past years.

She told him that he would remain her dearest friend. If ever she needed a friend she would call on him knowing that he would never fail her. And to this Doctor Henderson's reply was not in anger, that it was all arrant nonsense, but in sadness tinged with common-sense and an honest and deep respect.

Slowly but unmistakably Evelyn began to take on weight and color.

Under the terms of John's will the bulk of his estate had been entailed on the two children. The house and its contents, other personal property and bonds were Evelyn's without condition. She had the use of the entire income until the children would come into their inheritance at twenty-five. This income, chiefly because of the increasing profits from John's eight stores, made Evelyn, aside from all other considerations, well worth any practical man's attention. Mr. Johnson had been appointed administrator and joint guardian with the Columbia Trust Company. It was one of the trust company's messenger-boys who delivered each Thursday at four o'clock the two dozen long-stemmed American beauties which made Evelyn's entrance-hall's blue Chinese vase so attractive.

For a long time Evelyn was uncertain whether they came from Mr. Andrews, one of the vice-presidents, or from Mr. Vesey, the treasurer. Both lunched with her occasionally. She taught Mr. Andrews to grape-vine. Considering his girth Mr. Andrews grape-vined not so badly. Nor was Mr. Andrews, in spite of his baldness, without a certain physical charm. Frank Marshall, too, had gotten as bald as a billiard-ball. Compared to Frank Marshall Mr. Andrews was a sylph. One evening on a drive through the park in Mr. Andrews' new Packard limousine Evelyn had learned definitely that it was Mr. Andrews who had this standing rose-order with his florist. Mr. Andrews was a widower.

Evelyn weathered it all with no resulting unpleasantness. She went to sleep that night with a smile on her face. And the roses kept on coming.

Statements and reports of store-operations were sent to her quarterly. Quarterly she clipped them into a folder and laid them in a drawer of John's old desk. She only compared each quarter's total net with that of the preceding quarter. She only knew that her children would be richer at twenty-five than she had ever dreamed possible. In two years Allen,

at twenty-one, would already be a millionaire in his own right because of his grandfather's legacy.

Because Jane wished her to do so Evelyn began using great care in her selection of colors and costumes. Under Allen's tutelage she learned to swim an overhand stroke and to tango. Then she took lessons from a professional. She became serious about Christian Science, felt very old with Jane and very young with Allen and very open-minded about all sorts of things. Occasionally her talk shocked her bridge-friends at the Woman's Club. One or two of them expressed the opinion that Mrs. Ferris seemed to forget that there were obvious limits set for broad-mindedness. Evelyn defended herself warmly—and on the whole triumphantly—with the understanding, of course, that she was talking theories and this only to adult women—wives, mothers and charity-workers.

She bought a garage for her brother Howard on the Post Road outside Greenwich and set him up in business. Twice a year she required him to write a letter and send a report to Mr. Johnson. Howard regularly neglected to do this—which wasn't very decent of him. Every spring she gave her old clothes—and Jane's and Allen's old clothes—to Howard's wife and Howard's three gawky stepchildren. When Evelyn's stepmother, Mary Grainger, died in the spring following John's death Evelyn went up to Stamford for a month, arranged for redecorating the house, engaged a young woman for general housework to help Aunt Pru and answered all Aunt Pru's arguments with a smile. Then she went back to Brooklyn.

The cook left one month after Evelyn. This cook wrote Mrs. Ferris an insolent letter. Among other things she said that no human being on earth could have stood it one bit better than she. Mrs. Wells was a woman who ought to have the state of Connecticut all to herself. Aunt Pru also wrote Evelyn a letter. Thereafter Evelyn gave up trying to make things easier for Aunt Pru.

Only to Jane did her mother seem a bit old-fashioned. But Jane could make allowances. It was because her mother

still suffered from her old puritanical upbringing. That was all stupid. Even her mother had to admit that. Moreover in the old days things hadn't been forever crowding in on one as they did now into the experience of an up-to-the-minute girl like Jane. On the whole her little mumsey was a pretty good sport. A little finicky about certain things. Didn't matter. All mothers were. That was their business. Who could be an angel like one's mother?

So Evelyn was here at Shippan Point, near enough to her old home to run over now and then for a chat with her father and Aunt Pru; far enough away to give her children the pleasures due their age and social status. All very much as it should be. The only cloud in the summer sky was the fact that Allen had flunked his freshman mathematics at Yale and had to make up the deficiency before he would be allowed to play for the glory of his alma mater in tennis and football.

Now, here, before her, in his shirt-sleeves, chattering with Edna and Allen and Jane was the cause of the whole trouble. And they were all going over to the Greenwich Yacht Club together to watch Allen play the semi-finals for the right to challenge, on the following day, the winner of last year's state championship in tennis.

2

An hour later the three ladies and Ondricek were seated in the front tier of raised seats overlooking the center court of play. The match had not yet begun. Allen was warming up on the nearer court just below them. Jane was explaining that this tournament used to be played toward the end of the summer.

"Yes, I remember," said Edna. "John used to play in them."

"Oh, not in the tournaments, auntie. Papa never could play—"

"Your father used to play a wonderful game of tennis!" exclaimed Evelyn.

Ondricek smiled at her tone. He wondered how long her

husband had been dead. Probably kissed him on the forehead.

"Do you remember," asked Edna, "how he used to beat Frank Marshall when they were boys—and Frank would get furious—"

"Gloria's got another baby, auntie!"

"I thought Gloria and her husband—"

"They are! It's an awful mess!"

Evelyn shook her head. But Jane paid no attention to her. Ondricek answered Evelyn's sudden questions with one ear open to Chicago scandals and the Marshall family.

"Will you have a cigarette, professor?" Edna snapped open an enameled case and held it out.

"Thank you—if you don't mind."

"Is she so bad, Eve?"

"Who?"

"Edith."

"Why? What's the matter with her?"

"Why, mother, I'll bet she weighs two hundred—"

"Don't be absurd, Jane."

"How the devil can a woman let herself go like that!" said Edna, putting a cigarette between her lips and bending forward to light it at the match which Ondricek was holding.

"Perhaps we shouldn't smoke here—I mean we ladies," added Evelyn hastily, at Ondricek's gesture.

"Why not!" exclaimed Edna.

"It might be against the rules."

"Rules! Do you believe in rules, professor?"

"I do not!"

"It's only because I've forgotten so many that I've had any fun out of life whatever."

"You're a darling, auntie!" cried Jane.

Ondricek saw Evelyn's brows draw together in a little frown.

"It's all very well for you to talk that kind of humbug," she said.

And again Ondricek smiled. Probably never broke one in her life, thought he. However, she has common-sense. He

began talking more freely. Her frank cordiality gave him a pleasant sense of intimacy.

"Look!" exclaimed Jane. "They're starting!"

They settled back to watch the play before them. Ondricek's thoughts kept flittering about among idle speculations concerning these three. He looked past Mrs. Ferris and caught, thereby, indistinct glimpses of her face. Once their glances met and she smiled at him.

"Are you enjoying it?" she asked.

"Immensely!"

"I'm very proud of him."

Ondricek excused his stare by saying:

"He plays wonderfully well, Mrs. Ferris."

He was not thinking of her as an individual, but as a type about which he had had no great curiosity in the past. He was enjoying this contact with a world very unfamiliar to himself. How did a woman of this sort spend her time? How much lay beneath this quiet and very beautiful exterior? In spite of her gray hair there was something girlish about her, an unspoiledness. Precisely the trait he had seen in Allen. An eagerness in her expression as if she anticipated immense, untasted pleasures. A coquetry—not at all like that of her sister-in-law which was conscious and direct. He modified his first opinion of her.

During the intermission Allen came over to talk with them. He had lost two sets and won one. He was disgusted with himself. He had overplayed; was netting balls which should have been kills. All three talked to him eagerly, urging steadiness, caution. From this time until the finish of the match there was no talk except about the play. Ondricek felt the excitement that was tingling the nerves of this mother. Once during a sharp volley at the net she seized his arm and shook it. He felt the quivering of her set muscles. Again he revised his opinion of her. He, too, began to want intensely that this boy should win. When Allen lost the fifth and deciding set Ondricek felt a gloom which an hour before would have seemed to him ridiculous. He had, for the moment, identified himself with this family.

While Allen was in the dressing-rooms Ondricek went with the ladies to the club-house porch and drank with them a silver-fizz which Mrs. Ferris recommended. As he lifted his glass she suddenly laughed; said she remembered the first time she had been introduced to this drink by her husband—she wouldn't dare say how many years ago—then as suddenly stopped. Her sister-in-law was saying something about the good old days of the old building when the club was less pretentious and far less nondescript. Mrs. Ferris was looking out over the harbor before them with a far-away expression in her gray eyes. Ondricek wondered what she was thinking about. Then Allen came. With him a flock of friends.

He was trying not to seem depressed, trying to take his defeat manfully. Jane snuggled up to her brother and put her arm under his.

"Gee, Allie, I never saw you play in such abominable luck!"

"Next year, old man," said Ondricek and lifted his glass. Allen nodded and smiled. Half the people on the porch were looking at him sympathetically. Ondricek felt remorse. This failure in mathematics. Such a splendid chap!

"Confound it!" said Allen, "and Betty is coming for the finals to-morrow—" He shook his head savagely. "How the devil did I—"

"By the way, Allen, I've taken a room for her," said Evelyn.

"Thanks," said Allen, smiling at his mother, but gloomily.

"What Betty?" asked Edna.

"Beatrice Holden," said Evelyn. "Brooklyn girl. Related to the Hartford Holdens."

"Allen's sweetie," said Jane with a grimace.

"Don't be so damned silly," growled Allen. "How about our swim, prof?"

"Well—" Ondricek glanced doubtfully about the circle.

"Oh—you oughtn't to swim, dear. You must be dead tired. Please—"

"Golly," said Jane. "I wish I could go with you."

"Why don't we go back to the hotel?" suggested Edna. "You children can all bathe there."

"Please!" coaxed Jane. "There's plenty of time."

"Would you join us?" asked Ondricek turning to Evelyn.

"Oh, no!—thank you. I bathe always in the morning."

He was suddenly curious to see her on the beach, in a bathing-suit.

On the way home Ondricek sat with Allen in front. As they were passing through the main street of Stamford Mrs. Ferris called to Allen.

"Shall we stop a moment to say hello to grandpa?"

"No!" said Jane.

"Oh, mother, we haven't time. You never can get away from them. Well. If you really—"

"No, no. It isn't necessary. I only thought—"

"That's where my grandfather Grainger lives," said Allen, nodding toward the left without slowing down. Ondricek saw an old, rambling, high-gabled house set well back from the road beneath immense elms. Exactly. Crinoline days. Puts its label on one. She had it—unmistakably.

"A lovely place."

"That's the Ferris house next door. My father's—my aunt's. That is, it was. She sold it to a Jew a couple of years ago. They're getting in all through here. I mean," he corrected himself hastily, "the disagreeable kind." The boy's face flushed. If the professor had any Jew blood in him he had made a stupid blunder. "I haven't any prejudices—personally." But a professor at Yale—probably safe enough. "I don't know how you feel about that?"

"About what?" asked Ondricek. Allen was getting confused.

"Oh, this Hebrew question. Some people make a lot of fuss about it."

"Yes," said Ondricek. "More than necessary."

Allen knew he had made a bull, but was uncertain as to its nature. Ondricek was reflecting that this boy was running true to form. It made him unpleasantly aware of the gap between himself and these class-conscious New Englanders. The chatter on the rear seat also indicated a rough spot. He caught fragments of it.

"But I want you to go with me, Sunday, to grandpa's—"

"Oh dear—not to dinner!"

"Why not to dinner?"

"It's always the same old fricasseed chicken—"

"I tell you frankly, Jane—"

"Well, it's true! Why don't Aunt Pru let some one come in and cook for her? I hate to eat there. She always gets so flustered . . . displeased with you. . . . If we're going to dance all night . . . as you wish. I shall go over early for church. . . . Church! . . . Oh, mother's terrible! . . . I do think church in the summer time . . . puts me to sleep . . . that old Dr. Beebe."

Stupid! What was he doing here?

He saw the Andersons on their porch as they raced past. He left Mrs. Ferris and her sister at the hotel and went for a swim with Allen and Jane. When they returned Mrs. Ferris was waiting for them alone. She invited Professor Ondricek to come in the evening. He thanked her, said he must spend the evening with his friends. He looked at his watch. Allen invited him for the dance at the club on the following evening. Ondricek hastily refused. He danced very badly, he explained. Mrs. Ferris urged him politely. It wasn't necessary to dance. They'd let the children dance. She and her sister would enjoy talking with him.

"Thank you," he said. "If my time weren't so limited—"

"Why!" exclaimed Allen. "You're not going to leave?"

"Yes. I'm here for only a few days. That is—my plans are a bit indefinite. I must be at home within a week."

"Where is your home?" asked Evelyn.

"In Illinois. Herrin county. A little rough-neck mining town."

"Oh," she said vaguely.

"Your family interested in mines?" asked Allen.

"A mine," said Ondricek, smiling. "They make a living from one."

"Yes?" said Evelyn. Mine. Gold-mine. Why was he a professor?

"Your own mine?" asked Jane with a change of tone.

"Yes." Ondricek laughed. "It isn't at all what you think it is, I assure you. However, it's a little late for family history. I know my friends are wondering where in the world I am. I'll see you all again—surely—before I leave. I'm heartily obliged for a very delightful afternoon."

Allen insisted on taking him home in the car.

"I'm sorry you're not going to stay here longer," said Allen as they shook hands in front of Professor Anderson's cottage.

"Thanks," said Ondricek. "You get down to work, now, Ferris, and be ready for your make-up in September."

As he went through the gate to his host's lawn he turned for a moment and watched the big car shooting into high speed down the road. He drew a long breath. Pretty soft, he commented. Then he waved to the Andersons.

"What nationality is this professor—what's his name?" asked Edna that evening at the Ferris table in one corner of the hotel dining-room.

"Ondricek," said Allen, who had been exaggerating both the professor's importance on the faculty and the extent of their friendship.

"Sounds like stripping all the teeth off your main drive," said Jane.

"I don't know his nationality. An American, of course. I think his people are Polish, or Bohemian—"

"American!" said Jane.

"What kind of a mine do you suppose—?"

"Coal," said Allen. "It's all coal out there—"

"They must be rich."

"I think he's very charming," said Evelyn.

"Charming! Excuse me," said Jane.

"Do you remember Bohemia, Allen, when your father took the cure at Carlsbad? Carlsbad is in Bohemia, isn't it? Perhaps you were too small."

As she spoke Evelyn had a sudden mental picture of two huge Czechs quarreling in a doorway. One of them held a child in his arms. The child's forehead was bleeding. Czechs. Coal-miners.

"Sure I remember. I remember Carlsbad," said Allen.

"I remember we had a nurse," said Jane, "with funny long teeth and papa was forever scolding her. Whatever became of her, mother?"

At this same time Ondricek was telling the Andersons of his afternoon with the Ferris family.

"Might be pleasant for you to meet them—living here—"

"Oh, God, no!" said Anderson. "I don't want to get mixed up with that bunch—"

"Why not?" exclaimed Mrs. Anderson, thinking of various things, among others of her two children. "He's such an old stick! We never go anywhere."

"We can't afford it. A lot of stupid—"

"I don't agree with you at all!" exclaimed Mrs. Anderson. "What does she look like, Paul?"

"Gray hair—"

"I know her! Her hair is perfectly beautiful! I've never seen her close to. She walks a lot. The daughter is very pretty, isn't she?"

"Why—yes. I guess you'd—"

"Must be their plant just this side of Greenwich," said Professor Anderson. "Ferris leather. How about our clamming to-morrow?"

"Righto! When is low tide?"

On the following night Ondricek was sitting alone on the Anderson porch. The Andersons had gone into the village for a moonlight walk—incidentally to make some purchases. Ondricek was thinking of his friend Anderson, of his contentment, his solid if modest accomplishment, when the thought of Mrs. Ferris came again to his mind. It was because her face, as she had turned to him while they were watching the tennis-match the previous day, had seemed to him the face of one so completely at peace with the world. She had seemed to say to him by her glance, "You see, everything is quite as it should be."

They were dancing now at this club. He looked out at tree-shapes and shrubbery, shadows in the faint white light of a half-moon. A lovely night. He ought to dance more. Self-

conscious. Probably because he'd learned late. The girl who had taught him to waltz. What was she doing now? He had escaped—to Europe. Waltz. The only dance. He should have gone. She had said, let the children dance. What would they have had to talk about? How old was she?

Too much alone. In a rut. He lighted a cigarette. Wasting time. Nonsense to stick at Yale. God, how the time went! Ten years. Ten years since he had said good-by to Marksville. State University. Started late. Then Sheffield. Engineering degree, doctor's degree. A year in Edinburgh and Berlin. Where the devil had he scraped the money from? His fellowship, tutoring, a loan from old Uncle Pete. Never a dollar to spend without kissing it good-by. He smiled. His sister Milena had written of all they were going to do with the hundred dollars he had sent. Free.

Time. A gnawing, intellectual hunger had led him astray along a dozen interlacing paths. Teacher. A hundred unfinished designs under the old couch in his room at Yale. Should he have gone into the building game with Tom Crandall and Joe Tarbell? Engineer. Ought to be creating things, not talking theories. He remembered his debate with himself when the offer of this job at Yale and one with a big construction company had come to him simultaneously. He had chosen to teach because of the free time it would give him. What use had he made of his time? Teacher!

Evelyn sat on the terrace at the Greenwich Yacht Club and stared out over the moonlit waters of the harbor. A maker of soaps and toilet-articles whom Edna had recently added to her collection had just taken Edna inside to finish this dance. Evelyn was glad to be alone. She was alone very little these days—in one sense. In another sense she was very much alone. Her children were enjoying themselves. Allen was wriggling helplessly in Betty Holden's firming grip. Jane had her usual retinue.

Could she have been only Jane's age on that afternoon in this same place when John had proposed to her? Yesterday it had flashed back to her as they were sitting there with this professor. This professor. Something attractive about him.

Energy. Teacher. Not a bit like the Brooklyn Institute— That was the day she had met the Dixons. Tommy. She smiled. Tommy represented Brooklyn, now, in Congress. How long since she had seen Bess? Doctor Henderson. Not since she had seen them together New Year's Eve at the Plaza. Funny. This soap-manufacturer of Edna's was a nuisance. She would tell Edna so, too. Forty-one— And she hadn't begun to live! A hunger for life welled up within her, the old, never-satisfied hunger that had always lain buried beneath duties to this and that and all the humdrum that had made up her life as far back as she could think. The days slipped away, the weeks, months—years. Good heavens! Where did the time go?

Her children had no idea of her strength, her—had no idea of—lots of things. It was nonsense. They didn't need her —all of her. It wasn't enough. She would go to Europe next winter. Italy. She hadn't enough to do. She would work harder—practice two hours a day. Why not a recital? She could play better than half these artists. Made no difference what they all said. She could never go on like this indefinitely. Do something.

On the following morning, which was Sunday, having awakened early, Evelyn rose, had her bath, decided over her orange juice and coffee and toast to walk into Stamford to church. A gorgeous day. She would start early, have time to visit John's grave and the plot where lay her mother and Aunt Carrie and Grandma Sheldon. She had had shrubs planted all about this plot during the previous spring. She had had a little carved marble bench built beneath an old, old boxwood-tree. It would be pleasant to sit there and think over things in general. She would leave word for the children.

She compromised between clothes sufficiently sedate for church and clothes jaunty enough for a brisk walk, put a drop of perfume on her handkerchief, chose a purple parasol with a carved ivory handle and escaped through the lobby from a flock of hotel-attendants. No sooner had she well started on her way than she saw Professor Ondricek coming along the road toward her. And no sooner had she greeted him

and answered his questions as to where she was going than he exclaimed:

"Well! If this isn't luck for me!—that is, if you will allow me to walk with you—"

"Of course I will," she said, smiling vivaciously at him.

"For I got up rather early this morning—and my friends are still dead to the world—with apparently nowhere to go and—and now I see my good fortune has led me by the nose."

"Thank you. I thought, perhaps, you were coming to tell us good-by. I think you said on Friday you were going to leave in a day or two?"

"Yes. That is— Well, I had no intention of coming to say good-by—so early." He grinned. Faker! thought he, of himself. He had watched with a thrill of pleasure her easy stride as she came down the road toward him; then, later, her face, high-colored beneath her purple parasol.

"A shame, don't you think," she asked, "to waste such a morning in bed?"

"Decidedly!"

"I was thinking last night of all the time we fritter away—I, at least. That's what woke me up so early this morning—my conscience."

"Curious. I was thinking of the same thing, last night."

He began to speak of what had been running through his head on the previous evening as he sat alone on his friend's porch. She interrupted him to say it was too bad that he hadn't gone with them. She had thought of him last night and wished he had been there to talk to her. He said he had been thinking of her also—of the difference between her life and his. And what could he know about that? He made a few random guesses. She assured him merrily that his whole idea of her was pretty thoroughly mistaken. They began comparing notes.

It was her frankness that pleased him, her verve and youth. And Evelyn was finding this college professor very human and understandable. She wanted to please him. When she saw how well she was succeeding she felt very well pleased with herself. Her vivacity roused in him a corresponding

animation. Within half-an-hour of their so wholly accidental meeting on this road they were absorbed in that first give and take which marks the birth of a new friendship. Without knowing why, she was telling him much about the last twenty years of her life.

They were in Stamford before they had made any progress at all. It was still early—an hour before church-service. They walked on out along the road into the open country to the north. As they passed the entrance to the old cemetery Evelyn glanced an instant toward the corner where stood the old, old boxwood-tree and beneath it the marble bench on which she had planned to sit this morning and think things over.

Professor Ondricek was asserting that if marriage were regarded simply as a legalized agreement between two people to live together for the sake of producing and protecting children half the unhappiness in the world would be wiped out forthwith, for marriage with all its religio-moral hocus-pocus never did and never would make two people any less distinct and any less individual and was at best a makeshift for the protection of the herd.

Let him theorize. She knew a whole lot more about it than this professor of mathematics. If she knew him a little better she would tell him so. It was not so simple. However, he talked interestingly. She tried to follow his distinction between the social and economic obligations which marriage imposed and the love-life itself between a man and a woman. She had never reasoned it out like this. Of course there was a distinction. Who denied it? It was only love that made marriage endurable. Any one would admit that without all this explanation. It was common-sense.

"Well," said she, smiling overpleasantly, "don't ever try it. By the time you got through theorizing there would be nothing left."

"Oh—that's unfair!"

"Oh no, it isn't. You argue everything into thin air."

"Why—not at all!"

He continued eagerly. He gave her an uncomfortable feel-

ing. But she felt mentally quickened. It seemed to her that she herself had never talked so well. She admired his clear thinking, his ability to explain. However, if they—or she—were going to church they would have to return.

In front of the church she laughingly coaxed him to come in with her. It might do him good. He consented. When was the last time he had been to church? He said he rarely went because what was said and sung and done seemed for the most part such fiddle-de-dee.

Then she wished she hadn't asked him to come.

In the cool gloom of the interior Ondricek, sitting very stiff, stared at the details of altar and choir and architecture while Evelyn bowed her head against the back of the seat ahead and thought in a confused way of words which she had repeated hundreds of times before, but never with less thought of any significance they might have. Her father came in and took his seat beside them. Evelyn introduced him in a whisper to Professor Ondricek of Yale University. Her father whispered hoarsely: "You're all coming to dinner, aren't you?"

Evelyn nodded, whispered back: "I'll explain later."

So the two sat there and thought about each other and of coincidence which had so oddly put them there. And while they were thus occupied Doctor Beebe was singling them out from his scattered congregation and drawing out interminably —which he always confused with inspiredly—a rambling discourse on the indisputable fact that the love of God passeth all understanding, pointing out to them as he had to others for the last thirty years the difference, textual and essential, between divine and human, or carnal, love.

After the wind-up and the benediction, Evelyn, who felt pretty well fed up for one day on theories of one sort and another, hurried her father and Professor Ondricek out so that she wouldn't have to shake hands with Doctor Beebe and express any opinion about the matter. Outside in the vestibule she asked her father not to wait and gossip with all his friends, but to come directly home with them because she wanted Allen to get Professor Ondricek home in time for his dinner.

She had never known old Doctor Beebe to drag it out so endlessly! She laughed uncomfortably and glanced at Ondricek.

"To tell you the truth," said he, "it didn't seem a bit long to me. I enjoyed it. Honestly I did."

"But you're going to stay with us, professor, aren't you?"

"Oh, thank you, Mr. Grainger. It's very kind of you—but—"

"I don't think we'd better interfere with the professor's plans, papa," said Evelyn, nervously.

"I'm expected home," said Ondricek.

They walked together down the village street. Ondricek instantly liked this father. A gentleman—gentleman of the old school—straight and vigorous. Ondricek could see something of his daughter in him—the eyes—a certain fleeting expression when he smiled. They swung open a yard-gate and went up a path of moss-marked slabs of slate. This deep lawn under huge old trees and untrimmed bushes; this house evidencing decay in boards and shingles beneath its white paint. Of course she had sprung from such a home. How different, how vastly different from his own!

There was no car waiting. Aunt Pru came out from the dining-room. With Aunt Pru came odors, various, delightful, to explain her red but smiling face.

"Allen called up an hour ago," said she, "to tell you they can't come to dinner. Seems they have to be with some party or other at the club-house. They'll call for you in the afternoon."

"Well, I'm very angry with him!" exclaimed Evelyn disgustedly. "With both of them."

Aunt Pru pursed her lips and lifted her prominent brows.

"Pru, want you to meet Professor Ondricek of Yale University," said Mr. Grainger.

Ondricek looked into Aunt Pru's shrewd old eyes, at her thin, angular chin, her tight-drawn, paper lips. He felt the pressure of her bony, nervous fingers.

"To smell all these good things you've been making for your family gives me a kind of homesick feeling."

"I only hope you'll enjoy them."

"Oh, I'm sorry. I can't stay—"

"Well, of course you'll stay! Somebody's got to eat all this food I've cooked!"

"You just telephone your friends—" suggested Mr. Grainger.

"Excuse me," said Aunt Pru, "I've got things on the stove. You stay!—naturally." She disappeared.

Then Evelyn embarrassedly urged him. And since Ondricek knew perfectly well that the Andersons, in order to have their day free, did not dine until evening on Sundays he accepted and telephoned his friends where he was and why.

So he found himself with Mrs. Ferris and her father and Aunt Pru at what Mrs. Ferris declared to be a typical, old-fashioned Aunt Pru spread. Ondricek began talking happily and at random to these two kindly and hospitable New Englanders who showed in all they said and did that instinctive courtesy and common-sense which is the essence of good-breeding. And Evelyn, seeing that he was genuinely enjoying himself, began also to talk more gayly than she had in a long, long time. She felt suddenly a pleasant intimacy with this man in her old home as if she had known him for years instead of hours. And this, of course, was what her father and Aunt Pru assumed.

After dinner, while Aunt Pru was out in the kitchen helping a neighbor who had come in for the day, Evelyn sat on the porch with her father and Ondricek. Ondricek had smiled at Aunt Pru's expression when Evelyn had offered to help in the kitchen. He learned something of the family; that it was Mrs. Ferris' stepmother who had died a year before. Mrs. Ferris insisted that she remembered perfectly her own mother who had died when she was two years old. He learned of Grandma Sheldon. At her father's insistence Evelyn went in to the piano and played a Bach fugue. The old man and Ondricek sat outside smoking, in silence, the one smiling at memories drawn from the past by these solemn strains of music, the other thinking of the player, not the music, astonished at her skill, revising again his too hastily-formed first impressions of her.

Aunt Pru joined them. She asked Evelyn to play a composition of Haydn's which had always been a favorite of Grandma Sheldon's.

"My daughter," said Mr. Grainger, "has never used her talent as she should. It's a great pity."

"It is!" exclaimed Ondricek.

"She's too—flighty," said Aunt Pru.

Ondricek smiled.

Evelyn was striking a few slow, simple chords. She talked to him through the window. Did he know this? It was her grandfather's favorite song—"Jugendzeit." It was the first melody her grandma had ever taught her.

"Sing it, Eve," said her father.

Perhaps Professor Ondricek knew the original German? No? Well—if he would excuse her voice. She sang three stanzas. Ondricek ran in to where she was sitting.

"Never in my life have I heard a lovelier song! Thank you!"

At which she laughed merrily. Then she played on for him.

Her children drove up. Ondricek saw the immediate change in her, by reflex she drew in those sensitive little feelers of native impetuousness and became at once the conventional mother. She did not scold them for having disappointed their grandfather and great-aunt.

"This is awfully nice of you!" exclaimed Allen.

"You mean nice for me," laughed Ondricek.

"Well, yes. That too."

Ondricek was again aware of his strangeness in this family circle. At length he asked Allen if he would be good enough to take him back to the Anderson's, which reminded Mrs. Ferris of her tea-engagement with Edna. Ondricek heartily thanked Aunt Pru for her incredibly good dinner, promised most certainly to run in again for a talk before he left for the West. When he said good-by to Evelyn in front of the Anderson cottage he gripped her hand, again regardless of the rings she wore, and said:

"I am very deeply in your debt, Mrs. Ferris, for one of the pleasantest days I have ever had."

When again the car had started and Evelyn had called "Good-by, then, until to-morrow"—for she had invited the professor and his friends to tea at four o'clock on the following day—Jane exclaimed:

"Gee, mother, what have you done to him?"

Evelyn flushed.

"I wish you wouldn't be so silly, Jane. I get—it makes me a little tired."

She did not see the twinkle in Jane's gray eyes, or the slight pucker of her lips.

"Gee," said Jane—but this time she said it to herself.

3

Jane's flippant remark offended Evelyn. It implied something contrary to the facts. She did feel the stimulation of these hours of talk with Professor Ondricek, a pleasant anticipation of seeing him again to-morrow. She had flushed as she had spoken, indignant that Jane should attribute to her any purpose in this, or effort, or anything that was not simply the result of accidents over which she had no control. She had done nothing whatever. She had merely been herself.

Evelyn's experience in life, with men, had taught her sufficient to affect both her judgment of males in general and her behavior toward those particular specimens whom she met in her daily comings and goings as a widow whose physical attractiveness was vastly enhanced by her reputed wealth. It had taught her a good deal, also, that was locked in her unconscious, which had ripened her and made of her a woman who understands far more than she can translate into conversation. But her experience had only affected, it had not commuted her. She still had that ingenuous attitude toward experience. Things just happened to her. She herself was what she always had been. At forty-one she was no more self-analytical than she had been at twenty. She believed implicitly in the essential rightness of all her impulses.

She began forming a picture for herself of this new friend who had so suddenly come into her life, a picture far enough

from exact facts, but with enough truth in it to convince her, as she came to know him better in the days that followed, that she had known him at once, by instinct, perfectly, because they were by whatever mysterious force it is that designs such matters, made for each other. Sometimes she thought of it as nature, sometimes as fate, sometimes as God, never as anything springing from her own self-conscious acts.

Ondricek did not leave for his home before the end of that week as he had intended to do. He did not know, as he turned into his friend's gate after waving good-by to Mrs. Ferris, disappearing down the road, that much water would spill over the dam before he would buy a railroad ticket for Marksville, Illinois. He, too, at that moment, felt pleasantly stimulated, glad that his friends, the Andersons, would meet this remarkably attractive woman next day and share his pleasure. Nor did he think there was anything in his report to Mrs. Anderson to account for her flood of questions. He laid her eagerness to normal female curiosity and tried to satisfy it good-naturedly.

After the following day when Mrs. Anderson did meet Mrs. Ferris, and arranged for the Ferrises to join them on Wednesday for a picnic-supper on the Anderson beach, one complication after another cropped up to prevent Ondricek's departure until it was never referred to by any one except Mrs. Anderson when she speculated in whispers to her husband in their room at night about the possibilities of this rapidly developing and to her fascinating love-affair.

For the first time in her life Evelyn found herself able to talk to another clearly, frankly, confident of being understood and, if not agreed with, then at least with the assurance of a frank explanation of the reason for disagreement. These very disagreements were the source of much of her delight in Paul Ondricek. He opened up for her new vistas, explained to her things about which she had never before cared to think, or of which she had thought only in a confused, muddled acceptance of incongruous fact.

They talked together endlessly. She accepted at face-value his statements regarding facts and theories of wh·h she had

no personal knowledge. She marveled how one of his age could understand so thoroughly those puzzling problems of human relations, beliefs, habits, motives about which no one she had ever known had seemed to bother his head. She admired his energy, his lean strength which made her glad to be near him, which when she was near him, made her conscious of her own body and, whether with him or absent, of an eagerness to do things, to walk with him, swim with him, to seem supple and young and beautiful to him.

In all this there was no thought of passion, no emotional hunger. He was immensely restful to her as well as immensely stimulating. She felt full of wonder as in those old, almost forgotten days before her impulses and native eagerness to know and feel and do had frozen beneath the drab matter-of-factness of married life, as if all the ugliness of life were fading out of sight, as if with clearer eyes and from a new height she could see once more out and down into a world of beauty and endless possibility. She thought no more of her age. She had miraculously renewed her youth.

And Ondricek who had spent his time studying books, not women, asked himself again and again in a kind of wonder how this woman could have lived so much and learned so little; have steeped so long in her insipid social world and have retained this freshness. She was for him a limpid spring into which he never tired of gazing to see shimmering up at him through translucent depths distinctly visible, yet far-out-of-reach, rock-formations of habit and nature from which flowed his pleasure inexhaustlessly.

One day they sat alone out at the tip of Shippan Point where it dipped beneath the sea in a ledge of rock over which the flood-tide was swirling in its impeded rush to the deeper harbor beyond. He read to her the Song of Solomon which he had mentioned the day before and which, she had told him, she sort of dimly remembered to be a book in the Bible that nobody ever talked about. As he read on in his clear, quiet voice Evelyn, who was listening in astonished delight at the passionate outpouring of the young psalmist, kept wondering if Aunt Pru's Bible which had lain on their living-room

table ever since she could remember could really have this Song of Solomon in it and if Aunt Pru had ever read it.

When he had finished Ondricek sat for a moment staring out smilingly over the Sound to the distant Long Island shore. She, too, was silent and smiling, for what he had read had seemed exquisitely beautiful to her. Words of it lingered in her inner ear as chords of music which she loved lingered always after she had ceased playing them. He turned to her and a look of reverence came into his eyes. For she was indeed good to look at as she sat there beside him in her simple, outdoor dress of tan and blue and looked off over the sea with that expression of girlish wonder in her big gray eyes. He saw her wholesomeness, the vigor of her body as if he now saw it for the first time himself, and as if no one except himself had ever seen it. The freshness of her, the goodness of her, the worth of her. He spoke slowly as if tasting each word, and the half-humorous smile still lay on his lips as if he were talking to himself and she were not there in person.

"You are my garden, surrounded by a wall."

She turned to look at him. Perhaps because it was there, perhaps because she suddenly and intensely wished it to be there, something in his eyes, in his smile, a tonal quality of his voice told her that he loved her. Not as others had loved her, but understanding her, loved her for what he saw which others had never seen, glad that she was as she was, unselfishly, because she had something in her soul as well as in her body that was precious in his eyes. She felt a rhythm within her body and a restfulness which is harmony. She felt a sudden powerful impulse to give this man happiness, to give him of her strength, to give him the sweetness and richness which he saw in her and which was therefore hers; to be his garden, surrounded by a wall—for him alone. And something of all this shone in her eyes as she returned his smile.

"If I am, then the wall is only to shut out a world that doesn't see or care, and I hope for your sake that what you find in your garden is very beautiful."

He was silent a moment as if he were letting the significance

of her words sink into him. In this moment Evelyn realized that never before had she known what love meant. She looked out over the sea into infinite space and felt herself a part of it, a part of the cause and conclusion of all things everywhere. When he spoke it was not his words she heard, but the call of this man, this male, to the woman she was, ripe and eager for his taking.

During this same moment of silence this same realization was rising before Ondricek like smoke-cloud from the neck of a magic bottle, not to blot out sun and sky in darkness, but to cast over earth and sea a perfumed mist that made of his old world and whatever he had been and wished to be and planned to do in it a pleasant blur; a mist in which he could distinguish nothing clearly save the sacred-seeming form of this woman who would be his, hear nothing but her challenge to him, feel nothing but his desire to take her then and there without words, or theories, or explanations, or regard for anything but the sudden up-flaming of a mutual passion.

This he did not do for various reasons. One of them was that there were too many vacationists idling along the beach. There were others, but of these he was unconscious at the moment.

"It seems to me," he said slowly, staccato, "almost impossible—to believe that—you—really—want me to love you."

She looked frankly into his eyes. She nodded her head.

"Yes.—I want you to love me."

Although at that moment, in the flush of his sudden passion, he realized something of what these simple words must involve for her he could not know that they were the bravest words that Evelyn had ever spoken in her life.

"God knows," said he, as if he were at a confessional, "how intensely I want you to let me."

Later when they had risen to go, after he had poured out to her with new love's exaggeration his wish to live and work for her alone to the end that they two might be happier, it seemed to him, than any two human beings that ever lived, she said:

"Since I have talked to you so frankly of so many things

about myself I have thought again and again about you and me and about my past life and about the future. I'm no longer a girl. I've learned a good deal which perhaps I don't express very well. I know that I would be a fool to say anything to you, now, but the simple truth. I do love you. I want you to love me. I want you to help me make up all the time I have lost. I want to be near you—in spirit, even when I can't be near you with my body—to help you, always; to make you happy—as you will make me."

When he had left her these words kept repeating themselves and made him immeasurably proud because from them he could see what kind of a woman it was who was with this kind of honesty giving herself to him regardless of costs and consequence. For hours he wandered about with thoughts racing around this glowing center, trying to realize the incredible thing that had happened to him.

And later still, Evelyn, eager to be alone with her thoughts and her new happiness, said an early good-night to her children and Edna, went to her room, undressed, bathed, massaged, perfumed herself, searched in her mirror with a thrill of pleasure at her lack of success for any suspicion of wrinkles in her flushed, eager face, lay on her bed, recalled the words and the meaning of their talk together, felt her lover close to her, planned how she could arrange her time, how they could meet, when—here, perhaps!—reveled, for the first time in her life, in passionate imaginings. And never knew when thinking stopped and dreams began.

When Ondricek, a few days later, told her of the necessity of his running into New York to consult with an engineering-concern for whom he had done some work, it instantly occurred to Evelyn that it was equally necessary for her to get certain papers from her safe-deposit box which her lawyer had requested a few days before by telephone. Mr. Johnson had said, to be sure, any time before the first of the month and not to inconvenience herself in this hot weather. But unquestionably it was more business-like to attend to such matters promptly. Probably he really needed them.

"I'll take you in," she said, "if you like." And explained

that she had this business to attend to. She told Ondricek that she would pick him up early the next morning, called up Mr. Johnson, made an appointment at his office and accepted her lawyer's invitation to lunch on the following day.

When she explained to her family the necessity for her sudden trip to town she said that she might be late coming home because she would take this opportunity to see if everything was all right at home. She would lunch with Mr. Johnson. She would also, perhaps, have tea with Mrs. Henderson.

"I certainly don't envy you," said Edna, "going in in all this heat."

Allen advised his mother by all means to wait until after the crush of traffic before starting home, then asked her if she would like him to go in with her. Evelyn said, no! She wouldn't think of taking up his time so unnecessarily. He had little enough as it was before he would have to get back to his college grind. She might have Professor Ondricek for company on the way in. He had some business to attend to. He was to let her know that evening. It depended on Mrs. Anderson's plans. What? When she would get back. Jane sighed.

"I don't know how you can sit for two hours and talk to that—I'd get bored to tears. What do you talk about anyway? He gets on my nerves."

At which Evelyn colored and Allen growled:

"Oh, dry up. What difference does it make what you think about him? You've got such a scatter-brain yourself you don't know a brilliant man when you see one."

"Brilliant," muttered Jane, and Evelyn who had thought an instant said quietly:

"Brilliant or not, I admire him and he is my friend. As such I shall expect you to respect him—no matter how, or what, you may happen to think. I want that very definitely understood."

Something in her tone, rather than the words, made Jane glance at her mother in astonishment. She said, very humbly:

"I was only joking, mother. Of course I respect him. Good Lord!"

And after her mother had gone Jane was dying to talk to Aunt Edna about it. But Aunt Edna was peculiar about some things. So Jane didn't. Something told her it wouldn't be wise.

Evelyn and Ondricek talked very little during the first part of their ride in on the following morning. She asked him if he must be anywhere at any certain time. He said, no; that is, any time before lunch. He explained this connection with this firm of engineers. Two young fellows just starting in the building business. One of them had been his college-chum. They had coaxed him to join them. He had felt that he couldn't afford to give up his whole time to business. But he often made designs for them. They had written him about a cathedral to be erected for the city of Detroit. His friend Tom was full of pipe dreams. They hadn't one chance in a million of being considered for such a job. However, if they were willing to pay him for his work it was not for him to decide what chance they had of success. Evelyn told the chauffeur to drive more slowly. Suddenly Ondricek asked:

"But you—you have a lunch engagement?"

"Yes. With my lawyer."

"What a misfortune!"

"But you're going to be with your friends."

"Not for lunch. I could go there early and get through. I can tell them— Could you? Please!— Let's have lunch together!"

She laughed. His coaxing tone made her very happy.

"Perhaps I could. Suppose you call me, say, at twelve. I really don't know what I have to do for Mr. Johnson. I think I have only to sign some papers."

"You're wonderful!"

She gave him two telephone numbers. "The first is my lawyer's. The second is my house. You can reach me at one or the other."

She left him in front of his friend's office-building and went on to Brooklyn. Within a quarter of an hour after her arrival at her lawyer's office she had put her name to three

documents and so made good her excuse for being in town. Then she told Mr. Johnson that she would not be able to lunch with him.

"Oh, that's a shame! I—really—I have a little table all—"

"I'm sorry," said Evelyn with regretful firmness. "It's impossible. A dozen things have turned up. I must be back in Stamford. I apologize if I have put you to any inconvenience."

"Why, no," he stammered, "not—not—inconvenience."

"Another time." She smiled sweetly at his chagrin and hurried out. She didn't know why she was in a hurry. It was only ten o'clock. She went to her home.

It was closed for the summer; the first-floor windows boarded. She rang the bell of the basement. She had brought no keys with her. She hadn't really intended to come here. Her cook opened the door, astonished, and pleased. Both maids were at the shore. Evelyn went upstairs, turning on lights, looking idly about, half listening to her cook's chatter. In her room on the second floor it was less tomb-like. She pulled up the shades. Everything in order—as usual. Save for bare tables and bureau tops she might have just returned from shopping. She kept wondering how long it would take Paul to finish; if he was as impatient as she; where they would go. An idea struck her.

"Mamie! I want to have lunch here with a friend. Listen! Can you get something together—very simple—" She went on, eagerly, arranging her surprise for Ondricek. "But, mind you, at twelve-thirty—sharp!" Mamie, delighted at this break in the monotony, hurried out to make a few purchases, using the car for her errands.

Evelyn took off her hat and coat, washed, fussed about her room, kept glancing at her watch, holding it to her ear to see if it was really going. She went to the next room which she had remodeled into a living-room, opened her piano and played, idly. She tried to remember the name of the engineer with whom Ondricek was sitting. She could not. Tom, he had said; Tom—somebody. She'd simply have to wait. She

went back to her bedroom and sat by the window overlooking the park.

Her waiting gave her time to realize her happiness, to roll the sweetness of it under her tongue, taste the flavor of her opportunity and her freedom to enjoy it. She sat in this room in which had centered barren years of her life, beside that bed on which her husband had slept and on which he had died. No disturbing pictures came to distort the colorful vision which she was conjuring for herself. She did not think of her past. Over it a mist-pall reflecting only the iridescence of her new love. She rose nervously. Her watch showed ten minutes after twelve. A terror seized her lest he should not call, should have forgotten the number—should be prevented— She started at a whirring sound by her bed. She ran to her night-table and lifted the receiver. She was trembling. She murmured "hello" as if she were afraid of being overheard.

"Thank heavens!" said his voice. "I've been trying to get you for a quarter of an hour—"

"But I've been right here—waiting—"

"They said no answer—"

"But that's ridiculous! I've been here for an hour—more!"

"You have! And I've been walking up and down in this damned place waiting—"

"But why!"

"You said twelve—I didn't want—"

"Oh, come! I have everything ready—I mean—we'll lunch here. How long will it take you to get here?"

"There? Don't you think we'd better—?"

"No, no, no! It's all done—where are you?"

"In Brooklyn—at Borough Hall. I've been here for—"

"Oh, heavens! Come!" She gave him directions. "Come to the basement door—come right in. It will be open."

She waited and her longing for her lover became a strange, delightful fever sending through her shivers of expectancy. She was not a woman of forty-two, who had had a husband and lovers and children and sorrow and years of monotony and

hours of passion and dreams that had died. She was a girl again. Long before he could possibly have reached there she was standing behind the barred windows of the servants' dining-room watching the walk which led in from the gate. At length he came.

As she led him upstairs she talked gayly, intoxicated by the fact that her lover was actually here, in her home, where she was mistress, and alone with him, and free!

He was not talkative. The gloom of this big entrance-hall confused him, the sudden contrast of this locked and boarded house with the hot glare of the street outside. She was asking him if he did not agree with her that it was better to eat here, in quiet, alone, and, and everything instead of in some restaurant where they wouldn't be able to talk without—

"Oh yes! Yes! A thousand times!"

"Wait!" she mumbled, but returned his kisses, passionately.

They heard the clink of silver and china beyond the drawn portières. "Wait," she whispered. "We must have lunch first." And didn't realize that anything startling to him lay in her words. "Wait till I see if it's ready. You mustn't mind—anything. This is just a lark."

"Why did you bother with lunch?"

"Because I'm hungry, silly boy. Aren't you? Can you mix a cocktail? Come; I'll help."

She drew him into the dining-room, told the cook to bring everything to the table and they would serve themselves and Professor Ondricek would open the wine and—oh, Jiminy—she forgot! Were there any cigarettes in the house?—never mind, Mamie! Professor Ondricek had plenty. And if everything was ready in the pantry—was it? It was. Well, then they wouldn't need her any more. So Mamie took a square look at this new fellow and went downstairs mumbling: "So that's it!" And somehow Evelyn knew she was mumbling just that.

Together Evelyn and Ondricek mixed an amazingly perfect cocktail, not confining proportions too strictly to the fact that only two were present. Together they drank to what lovers usually drink on the occasion of their first lark together

well off the traffic-jams in Main Street. They served each other with the most delicious food that Ondricek had ever tasted and drank more toasts in what was, in fact, one of the last three bottles of John Ferris' old stock of Château Yquem. But Evelyn was far from any thought of this fact at the time. As they drank and ate and smoked he would come to her, fling his arms about her, tip up her face to his, search merrily for possible spots which he had not covered with innumerable kisses. When Ondricek tasted that imperial pear brandy which Allen had discovered somewhere for his mother he sighed. He declared solemnly that only the lips of Evelyn herself could prove to him that a diviner flavor than this was to be found on earth.

She jumped up, felt an effervescence streaming up from her toes, like bubbles in a glass of champagne.

"Let's smoke upstairs. This is too—ghost-like." She pointed at the high-backed chairs draped in linen-dusters along the wall. At that instant she did, in fact, vaguely feel the chill presence of the past. But Ondricek laughed and threw his arms about her.

"You marvelous woman!"

They went arm-in-arm up the dark, soft-carpeted stairs and into her bedroom. She sat on a couch heaped high with cushions in the corner by the window and indicated a place beside her. For a moment Ondricek stood looking about him, trying to realize the fact of his being there. Then he went to her, knelt down before her, put his arms about her, said that if he were a Greek and not a savage he might know how to express his reverence. And she smiled down at him, holding his upturned face between her hands:

"Well, don't be too savage and—and—" The rest died into a mumble because of a sudden and practically complete physical obstruction to speech.

4

Later—how much it might be she didn't even try to guess—Evelyn drew aside the silken hangings of her bedroom window

in order to look out on the world and see if it was where she had left it. And seeing that it was and that a man evidently her chauffeur sat in an automobile evidently her own Renault down on the driveway before her house, she was amazed at the possibility of even a chauffeur sitting there for however long it may have been within fifty feet of all that had happened to her and not being in the slightest degree affected by it—being, in fact, asleep. Ondricek, in spite of the gush and rattle of the shower raining upon him, heard her laughter and laughed also, on general principles, asserting vociferously and more or less tunefully:

The Pope! He leads a merry life, merry life!
He's free-e from every care and strife—ca-re and strife!

Whereupon Evelyn ran to her piano in the next room and drowned the pope's merry life beneath a flood of exultant resonance. Just at the climax of Taussig-Schubert's Marche Militaire she recollected Allen's advice to wait until after the crush of traffic before returning to Stamford. She ran to the door of the bathroom and called:

"Sh! I'm going to telephone!"

For she had instantly decided that she and Paul must have dinner in town together and go to a concert—any old concert! Music—somewhere; if only in a park—yes! Out of doors! They would ride back together under the stars. Evelyn sat on the edge of her unrumpled bed, noted its unrumpledness with a smile that never yet an unrumpled bed has caused throughout the history of womankind, waited for her sister-in-law to come to the phone.

A half-hour later she went arm-in-arm with her lover down those same dark, soft-carpeted stairs. While Ondricek went on out to the car Evelyn bravely faced her cook. She said that she might run in again before the summer was over, but next time—that is, if she came again—she'd give Mamie plenty of notice. And Mamie begged her to come right often and said it was a joy to see her, that never in her life had Mrs. Ferris looked so young and fresh-like and certainly her vacation must be doing her a world of good and how was

Miss Jane and Mr. Allen—and Evelyn had difficulty breaking away.

When she came out of the basement-door into the glare of the August afternoon she felt a little wobbly. But since any wobbliness in front of this chauffeur who was holding open the door of her car would certainly be indiscretion of the first order she laughed loudly as if Mamie had just said something very funny, sprang into the car, demanded gayly:

"Where is it we must go?—Oh yes! Drive out along the parkway, Albert. Take the road out toward—Babylon!" And while she was waving good-by to Mamie she mumbled: "We've got loads of time. We'll ride first—yes? And eat out at a little place I know. But you buy a paper—somewhere. We've simply got to go to some concert or other."

Paul clenched his fist, exclaimed with desperate determination:

"If it's the last thing we do on earth we'll go to a concert!"

From this afternoon of her first passionate adventure with Ondricek Evelyn's world was suddenly clothed with new color, new meaning. This change, this reflection of herself in the exterior of things affected not only her thinking, but all that she did and the way she did it and all that she said and the way she said it. And all who knew her, or who only watched and wished that they knew her, saw her swift flowering with wonder. For although Evelyn dwelt ceaselessly on her love for Ondricek and what must happen because of it, she tried—and for a time successfully—to conceal the fact itself. It could only be misunderstood; whatever she said misconstrued. It was an infinitely precious something which she would hold for herself, alone.

She wrote Paul letters in her room at night to hand to him on the following day. She reveled in pure emotion, fell asleep with his name on her lips, thinking of what he might at that moment be doing. She would ask him when she saw him, if by telepathy their thoughts had met at such and such an hour. She would tell him that at a given moment—at half-past eleven, say—she would be thinking of him in her room and that he, wherever he was and whatever he

was doing, must think at that instant of her. At the appointed moment she physically felt his presence, and with what was, in fact, self-roused passion she willed herself to be an inextricable part of him.

Ondricek was as completely absorbed as was Evelyn in their love-affair. But it was the practical considerations involved which, during his hours away from her, kept him in a kind of ferment in which he never arrived at sane conclusions and which tinged his sudden powerful passion with a confusion of doubts and questions. He was anything but a shrewd individual.

He was practically penniless; always had been, or never more than three steps away from it. Until now it had never bothered him except in a more or less humorous and theoretical way. He exaggerated Evelyn's wealth and her dependence on wealth precisely because he had never given a moment's practical thought to the matter. He had seen sufficient evidence of her disregard for money. It had amused him—looking on at a distance. But if he personally were involved in this regardless extravagance? The thought twisted his face into a sour expression because of a theoretical contempt for wealth plus a practical realization of how far he was from having done what he had intended to do in the world.

This was the grit in his taffy. Everything ahead of him, nothing behind—a devil of a situation to be in at this juncture! He hadn't qualified. A man to live with a woman like Evelyn Ferris must have accomplished something in the world, not be unable to pay her florist's bills without skipping his room-rent. All very pretty to sit around on beaches making love to a gorgeous woman; in a month he'd be back at work where he belonged, where he could think sanely once more. And simultaneously he would feel the tremendous stimulation of his love for Evelyn, of her confidence and pride in him, feel new power, a mighty urge for work that lay ahead.

When they were together they talked of anything but practical considerations. They were in the first flood of the tide. They were each intensely curious about the other. Her curiosity did not reach back to his childhood and concern itself

with the incidents of his life. He, as he was, was interesting to her—sometimes startling, always vital—not how he had come to be that way. He, on the other hand, was forever boring in to find out what had happened to her to make her think, or believe, or act as she did. In these weeks of summer she told him more about herself than she had ever before realized was there, buried up, half forgotten. At certain confessions she would laugh uncomfortably, or sadly; say that she was ashamed to stand so stripped before him, afraid that he could never love her after learning all this about her. And he, trying valiantly to adjust what she had told him to his previous theories, would swear that she grew daily more precious, more beautiful, more lovable in his eyes.

Once, after answering question after question, quite honestly, with that puzzled little frown of hers puckering her brows, trying not to conceal, or evade anything that he wished to know about her, trying, too, to make him understand why or how she had done what she had done she exclaimed anxiously:

"Can you really understand this, Paul, and forgive such—"

"Don't—please, dear! Who the devil am I—I don't know why I ask all these fool questions. A kind of morbid curiosity. It's none of my business. I love you, Evelyn, precisely because you are so perfectly frank and wholesome. I wish to God I were one-half as good as you."

She said thoughtfully:

"Whatever I have done it couldn't have been so terrible—because I never thought it was."

He laughed delightedly. But she was serious.

"Have I been an awful hypocrite?"

"No!—Nonsense!—We all fool ourselves, of course—"

"I don't— Not any more!— Anyway, one thing is certain. Whatever you think about—about what I did—oh, all those years ago, it has nothing to do with you and me. You know that, don't you? I understand so many things now that I never thought of before. Sometimes I believe that all my life I've been asleep. Only that's too easy a way of excusing oneself. I don't want to excuse myself."

"There is nothing," he exclaimed, "more useless and unnecessary!"

September came and with it the end of their summer idyll. Ondricek had talked with Anderson about Mrs. Ferris. He had to talk with some one about her. It was becoming clear to him that he could not go on teaching at New Haven. He had taken the job only for what had seemed a temporary advantage. He wanted now to be in New York—not, of course, because Brooklyn was a part of it, but because there and there only could he work out his future. What did Anderson think of this idea of going in with Tom Crandall? Well, frankly, Anderson thought it was pretty damned nonsensical. What the devil was so nonsensical about it? Suppose, for example, this design for a cathedral on which he had started work—and so forth. Anderson grunted, grimaced, asked:

"Why the devil don't you marry her and be done with it?"

At which Ondricek leaped up, waved his arms and exclaimed:

"Don't talk like an idiot! What business has any one in my situation marrying any woman—let alone—"

"Well, what business have you got, not marrying her?"

"Oh—hell! Don't— Tommy-rot!"

Probably it was. Professor Anderson wasn't so sure about the wisdom of his wife's eagerness for this marriage. Women get that way, he reflected, the minute they scent a love-affair. They can't leave well enough alone. Kind of self-defense complex. Want everybody in out of the wet.

Edna more than suspected the true situation. She read plainly enough the meaning of those half-unconscious glances with which Evelyn replied to Ondricek's non-committal questions. Edna said nothing, tried to avoid seeing, showed her good-will in a thousand little ways. Evelyn knew that her sister-in-law knew. There was no necessity of talk between them.

Jane, too, had her troubled moments. This algebra-professor rubbed her the wrong way. She resented his being so

constantly with them, or with her mother alone. In a way it was none of her business. In another way it was very much her business. He was robbing her of something peculiarly her own. The thought of her mother's being actually in love with this tiresome Bohemian, or Austrian, or whatever he was, she rejected as absurd.

Allen suspected less than any one else. Suspecting less, he understood more. He was deep in the throes of his own first serious love-affair. He had long, intimate talks with his mother about Beatrice Holden, about the relation of a man to a woman, about his future in business and in life. In some of these talks Professor Ondricek shared. Allen had worked, too, with Ondricek on many mornings over his mathematics. Allen's former admiration of him was colored now by the amazed realization that he himself had somehow learned what Algebra meant. He knew he would pass his make-up examination.

Ondricek had been several times with Evelyn in her girlhood home. He had learned really to know Aunt Pru and Evelyn's old father and to understand Evelyn herself far better because of this. He enjoyed the old man's quiet comment on the world about him, his reminiscences of the past. He met Evelyn's brother Howard. Evelyn's half-apologetic attitude toward Howard annoyed Paul. He exaggerated his liking for Howard. What he was really doing was scolding his mistress, her deep-rooted respect for prosperity. From Aunt Pru and Mr. Grainger Paul also learned a good deal about the Ferrises and Evelyn's former husband. He began to form a different picture in his mind of John Ferris than had taken shape from Evelyn's account of her married life. John Ferris had apparently been a pretty damn decent sort of fellow.

Early in September Edna left for a few weeks in the Berkshires, Jane to enter her college-course at Smith. A week later Ondricek and Allen returned to New Haven, Evelyn to Brooklyn and her home opposite the park.

She felt, now, in these rooms the presence of her lover, felt not dread, or regret, or listlessness, or depression, but a great

energy and joyousness. She was impatient for the time to come when again she could see Paul, hear his voice, feel his arms about her, taste again the passionate delights of those unforgettable hours which she had spent with him here.

A great deal of this was in her letters to him. They became a record of her innermost thoughts and hopes and longings. She would write on and on, ever more eagerly. Then hastily she would close her letter without rereading, dismayed at her own boldness, anxious about its effect on him, wishing to begin all over again and do it better, thinking herself subtle where she had but cloaked simplicity in phrases stilted because of her awe of words. She never knew how endlessly she repeated herself. She never knew in what the beauty of her letters lay for him.

Twice she found an excuse to go to New Haven. On the afternoon of the Yale-Harvard game she sat with the Andersons and Ondricek among other members of the faculty with Yale winning. She saw her son called out into the battle during the last two minutes of play and believed it to be because of some tremendous crisis.

Had Evelyn heard the comment on that day of students and professors who knew Ondricek and had seen him sitting with this beautiful widow who betrayed in her excitement a good deal of what she thought lay well concealed beneath a never more carefully decorated exterior, she would have flushed far more furiously than she had at Mrs. Anderson's whispered:

"Mrs. Ferris. Please, oh, *please* tell me if anything is going to happen!"

She had laughed and asked demurely:

"Why! I suppose anything can happen, can't it?"

It was after this glimpse of her, when her beauty and freshness were enormously enhanced by his memories of hours with her of passionate delight, that Ondricek definitely decided on resigning his position and moving to New York where he could be near her. He wrote to his friend, Tom Crandall, arranged to meet him on the day following Thanksgiving. Then he wrote Evelyn what he had done and why, that he would meet her anywhere she wished for a Thanksgiving

such as only two beings like themselves, privileged beyond all imagining, should celebrate in accordance with that Scripture declaring that God is love.

Then Evelyn who had already arranged to spend Thanksgiving at Stamford with Allen and her father and Aunt Pru wrote to her father of this sudden addition to their family-party. They should give Professor Ondricek the front room and she would take Edith's old room. And of course they wouldn't mind Professor Ondricek's presence whom they all admired so much and whom they would make very happy indeed because he was so far from his own home, etc.

When Paul received his instructions he was at first a little disappointed. He had vaguely pictured something else—less turkey and—and family. He consoled himself that on the following day he would have her alone in Brooklyn.

But when he was there in the old Grainger home, and realized by sight and smell and taste and touch and hearing what one of Aunt Pru's Thanksgiving dinners meant to a man he decided that as far as the real reason for Thanksgiving was concerned Evelyn had planned well. When, after a mighty dinner, they all sat in the living-room and Evelyn played one after another her father's favorite compositions and argued with them both about music and the comparative merits of composers; when, after that, he and Evelyn walked with Allen through a blustery November late afternoon along the road to Shippan Point past many spots hallowed by memories which they could only share by glances, or a non-committal word; when, later still, having returned to a fire crackling in the huge old chimney-place and sat about it to drink a glass or two of Aunt Pru's bottled cider and stop an incredible appetite with Aunt Pru's equally incredible doughnuts—then Ondricek decided, taking things by and large, according to the President's proclamation, that there and there only was the proper place for a man to spend Thanksgiving-day.

Very late that evening, with all lights out in the house and in a silence which spoke of the near presence of this God to whom he had rendered thanks that day, Paul stood by his window and looked out from the dark of his room at an

incalculable maze of stars twinkling down through a void like the hunger in his heart for the woman so near him. He could hear her moving about in the room next his, preparing for sleep. The photograph of that mother whom she had never known stood on the bureau behind him where he had asked her to leave it. Here, in this low-ceilinged room, in this silence, with the hovering spirits of her ancestors, the familiar objects of her girlhood around him, with her father and her son asleep on this same floor, he had, as never before, a measure of her worth. When, in the stillness he heard a stirring, a rustling, a click of the latch, turned with a shock of realization to meet her clad in night-dress and kimono, to breathe her perfume, to receive from her lips a last good-night kiss and a whispered wish for happy dreams while they would lie asleep so close to each other in her old home, he, then, had not all ability to think suddenly left him, might have reflected that were he Homer he would make of Aunt Pru's Thanksgiving another siege of Troy.

When Evelyn on the following day had left Paul on the curb before his friend's office-building and had started on to Brooklyn with Allen she knew from Allen's silence and expression that he was thinking about herself and Ondricek. She enormously respected Allen's opinion. She said, almost timidly:

"Do you think he is making a wise move, Allen?"

Allen nodded his head. Paul Ondricek as a professor of mathematics and Paul Ondricek breaking into the building-business were two very different individuals from Allen's viewpoint.

"I certainly do," said he.

"Do you?" she asked warmly.

"He'll make good, don't worry." Allen looked frankly into his mother's eyes. She flushed slightly. He took her hand and squeezed it. There was no further need of words. Now she knew that he knew. The thought of her boy's confidence in her and of his unexpressed wish for her happiness brought a film of tears to her eyes. Woman-like she couldn't keep silent.

"You know I am very fond of him," she said in a low tone.

"Yes."

"You know, don't you, that that only makes it possible for me to love you more dearly and to wish to be more to you and closer to you than ever before? You can understand that, Allen?"

He smiled, a little wistfully. He was not thinking of his father as she believed. He was thinking of Beatrice Holden.

"I understand perfectly, mother. I hope you two will be awfully happy." She smiled, too, and her flush deepened. If he knew? How would he judge her? Again, clearly, she realized the power of those inescapable obligations to which she could only blind herself for a time, but which held her inexorably. Therefore she attached a very different meaning to Allen's added words from that which he intended to convey. For the thought of his dead father had, in fact, suddenly occurred to Allen and the thought of his mother's impulsive unselfishness and the possibility of unknown risks and the deep-rooted wish to protect her. So he added: "I want you to understand, mother, that whatever you do it will always be right in my eyes—always."

While Ondricek sat with his friend Tom Crandall discussing the proposition of Ondricek's resigning his position forthwith and coming into the firm of Crandall and Tarbell as architect and engineer at an initial salary of fifty dollars per week plus a percentage of profits on any construction jobs which he should turn in personally to the firm. They looked for things to open up in the spring. In the meantime Paul's salary—God knew it wasn't much!—could cover his living expenses—that is, it could if he made it.

Ondricek laughed boyishly. He was excited. He was like a boxer watching the preliminaries. He hadn't come to dicker about salary. He was ready to take pot-luck with the concern. He knew Tarbell had money. He knew Tom Crandall to be an able and experienced builder. He was eager to turn loose. He was already at work! His design for the Detroit cathedral would be his first contribution to the firm.

He hurried over to Brooklyn—to his mistress!

In their talk that afternoon about their approaching liberty to see each other at will, to enjoy concerts, the theater together, to read, to talk endlessly, to love, there was no mention of the word marriage. She would have been startled had he done so. The word had occurred to herself a good many times in recent weeks as a remote contingency. The glamor of her love-affair was strong on her. She reveled in a freedom which she had never imagined possible until it had become a reality. She felt her independence as strength. Her lover's adoration of her had inspired her with a new confidence, new pride in herself. She resolved that he would find in her only a source of inspiration; never one of care. Above all things she would avoid touching his pride, or allowing him to feel any difference in their material circumstances. One difference there was which obtruded itself constantly in her thinking. It was the difference in their ages. Here was the raw flesh of her own pride. She was no fool. In her heart she knew that her summer-time was waning, that the tang of fall was in the air. In this never even self-acknowledged fear that her capacity for physical passion had a rapidly approaching time-limit was rooted her passionate hunger for her lover.

She had more than once, but laughingly, spoken of this difference in their age. Always, instantly, he had cried her down. To him her half-serious questions were absurd. He had come upon her in her full flower. He was incapable of visualizing her stripped of her petals and dry with age.

On this afternoon, as always, he tried to convey to her the joy which her love had brought him, the pride and the strength it had lent him, the intensity of his desire for her. As he talked his arms were about her, his face close to hers, his eyes searching the curves of her face for the lurking-places of that spirit which evaded while it inflamed him. He poured out to her the wine of his passion for the beauty of her body, for the beauty of her soul.

"My mistress!" he cried in rapture. "My beautiful mistress!—Mistress of all I am or care to be!"

And she, who had been a bit shocked when first he had called her mistress, understanding, now, what he meant by it, in-

toxicated, proud from a realization of what her womanhood meant to him, fondled his cheeks, ran her fingers through his stubborn hair, felt her once rock-ribbed standards of conduct swept away in a resistless tide, told him in words more passionate than his own of her will to live for him only, regardlessly, as he wished her, here, or anywhere, to the ends of the earth—and beyond.

The Evelyn who spoke was a far cry from the girl who had shuddered to the floor of a Waldorf corridor on a distant New Year's morning, or from the wife who had lain sleepless, reviewing in bitterness six years of married life, or from the woman who had knelt in penance before her aunt's coffin—yet the same and what she was not only because of those accidents of her past. Notwithstanding all she said, had Ondricek proposed to Evelyn that they marry he would have added to her happiness to an extent which neither he nor she at that moment considered possible. For Evelyn was but concealing beneath brave words a home-loving Penelope, venting in passionate recklessness her desire to hold inviolate this lifelong dream of beauty and of passion now come true.

Ondricek heard only her words. He accepted them at face-value, without thinking, since they accorded so completely with his desires—which is what lovers always have done and always will do.

The telephone rang in the little booth beneath the stair. Evelyn went to answer it while Ondricek, to be near her, stood listening in the open doorway. It was Allen who was wondering if his mother would excuse him from having dinner with her and Ondricek as they had planned. "But my dearie! You must do what*ever* you—why certainly take her!" Beatrice had bought tickets. Would she be disappointed? She interpreted this conversation to Ondricek who grinned ecstatically in the doorway. She talked eagerly, as though unwilling to let Allen go, as though she had not seen him for months and would not see him for months to come.—What a marvelous mother, thought Ondricek, is this equally marvelous woman! convinced by lover's logic that in Evelyn were uniquely fused two antagonistic elements.

"It's a dispensation of our especial providence!" he cried as she hung up the receiver. And she, laughing, returning his embrace on the crest of a wave of delight, agreed with him.

She left him to go down and explain to Mamie that Mr. Allen would not be with them for dinner; that therefore Mamie should prepare something very, very simple to serve early for she herself would probably like to go out a little later. And all the while she knew that nothing on earth would drag her away from home that night. She boldly gave her maids an evening off; told them that she had telephoned for tickets at the Hippodrome for them by way of a little Thanksgiving party—because—because on Sunday night, which they usually had free, she was going to give a little farewell-party for Mr. Allen and would want them to work especially hard and have everything especially nice for Mr. Allen's friends. And before going back to Paul she did telephone the Hippodrome. And on the way between pantry and telephone she did arrange most of the details of Allen's very suddenly planned farewell-party.

While Ondricek, being a male and therefore stupid, as well as a lover and therefore feverish, was wondering what in hell could be keeping her all this time and whether, in fact, she was —well—as she seemed to be. However, if he had had any such fleeting doubts she soon removed them.

On that night after they had eaten, after the maids had served them coffee in the little den off Evelyn's bedroom, had set on a rosewood table cigarettes, ash-trays, glasses, a silver holder of Bohemian glass bottles containing liqueurs, had said good-night and hurried off to the glories of the Hippodrome, Ondricek cried out in rapture that along with Evelyn's amazingly complete ignorance of arithmetic, geography, history and politics she had a native intelligence and a gift for arranging things that qualified her without question, then and there, for any diplomatic post whatsoever at the disposal of her country's Secretary of State. In short, she was a born little fixer.

Then Evelyn wondered, since apparently they weren't planning to go anywhere in particular that evening, if they wouldn't be more comfy if they got all ready for bed—so

that in case they got sleepy early and bored with each other's company they could— And even if they didn't and stayed up quite late and Allen should happen along before he normally ought to arrive after theater, theater-supper and seeing Nellie home why then they could run into each's room and slip into each's bed and pretend to have been asleep for hours and hours. Whereupon Ondricek declared solemnly that, considering all the various factors in the situation, Evelyn's proposal seemed to be right along that same line of infallible intelligence. Then she jumped up suddenly and ran into her bedroom and shut the door.

And never again that night did he think of her as a diplomat.

5

In her daily letters to him she wrote endlessly of the wonder of their love, of her new pride, her new courage.

"Dearest, I love you! I love you like the green grass loved the soft, refreshing rain of yesterday. I love you more and more—every day that comes—and I don't know where my love begins nor where it ends. It just *is*. A living part of me—or am I a part of it? It grows and grows until I seem to be only an insignificant little atom and my love a great, powerful force that carries me with it, making my life one mad, glad song! Sunshine is streaming into my window, calling me out into its warmth and light, but I refuse to go. For I have to tell you how much I love you. I say it aloud at least a dozen times a day. Do you ever hear me, dearest? Surely my thought-waves must reach you somehow—because I put so much feeling into them.

"To-morrow I have a busy day. Madame Peret's class at ten o'clock. It's wonderful the way my French is coming back to me! Then the hairdresser's and luncheon at the Woman's Club. If it only were not for my gray hair! Edna is forever telling me to dye it. Would you really scold if I should dye my hair?—Then in the afternoon I have to be at a meeting of the Free Kindergarten Society and afterwards meet Edna at the Plaza. To-night I shall hear Gabrilowich

play! How I long that you could be sitting beside me then! Whenever I listen to a great artist my old girlhood ambition comes over me. How I dreamed of becoming a great pianist and of making thousands happy by my music! Now I know I shall never be that. But I have learned also that a woman's happiness can only be through and because of the man she loves. Now I know this greatest happiness of which a woman is capable. Now I have your love that is making me all over again, a new me, filling my life with all the beauty and understandingness of things of beauty for which I have longed in my innermost soul. Truly you have awakened me and with my awakening has come my new life on our island of dreams! Thank you for all your gifts, my lover! Thank you for all your love which daily enriches my life. Thank you for awakening me—so that I can in turn give to you all there is in my heart—of love—of happiness—of passion such as only two lovers can know who go to seek the beautiful. I love you, dearest. I send you so many burning kisses full of promise—full of hope—full of love. I am waiting for you, dearest. I am happy because soon I shall see you again. That thought supersedes all others—making me gloriously happy—for I love you—I love you—I love you!

"Yesterday I practiced for hours on the Grieg Concerto. I want to play it beautifully, perfectly for you, my lover! You shall be my teacher in all things—as you have taught me how to love. And I shall bring to you and interpret for you the beauty of music. I shall always be your passionate mistress—always that! But I also want so intensely to be always your comrade—to go with you and do with you and understand better to appreciate your wonderful mind. I am so proud to know that I can make you happy. It is because you have taught me how. The beautiful things you say and write are always in my thoughts. You have put me high up above the earth. I want to be beautiful for you. I want my body to be beautiful for you. And my thoughts, too, always beautiful for you. Hooray! This morning for the first time in goodness knows when, I weighed *one hundred and forty pounds!*—

Even a little less! The thing wiggled a little and went down at the one hundred and forty mark. Isn't that good news? Don't laugh at me! Every morning I exercise now five minutes before I take my bath. Then afterwards I weigh myself because maybe I lose an ounce or two from exercising. Yesterday's letter was so beautiful! I treasure each one. Each is a separate jewel which I am piecing together, one by one, into the chain of my love. Has ever a woman in all the world had a more beautiful, more precious one? It is the only adornment that I shall ever wear on my bare body in secret for you alone. This only you will ever see! I am living in a dream-world since I know you, dearest. I am happy there because I am always with you there and we need never trouble ourselves about the future. Forgive my last letter. Prosy old thing. Oh, if I could only write as beautifully as you! And please never, never mention my wealth. It never will—never can be a barrier! It must be a help for you—for us. It is not mine. I have learned not to be grateful to my husband. Now I understand so many things I never understood before! Please never think of my past. I never think of it except to long that I might be twenty years younger so that I could give you twenty years more of youth and my passionate love for you."

She sent him her photograph, rather, six different poses from which he should select the one he liked best and return it to her. She would have it framed for a Christmas present. But that would not be her real Christmas gift to him! She was counting the days until he would come for the holidays. The house would be full, but never mind! She would find a way. The invitations for the dinner-dance at which Allen would announce his engagement to Betty Holden were already mailed. He must talk to Allen. She hoped they would be wonderful friends. Allen was such a wonderful boy and admired him so much. It made her happy to think of them there together. Had Allen come to see him? She had written him to do so. Aunt Pru wasn't a bit well. She had asked Evelyn in her last letter if she was going to marry "this professor." She was such a dear! Howard had the agency now

for Cadillac cars. If only he would stick to business. She was buying him a lathe for Christmas. Poor fellow.

"Please forgive me for not writing these two days. I have been so terribly worried. But everything is all right. We were both so insanely happy over Thanksgiving and I just didn't want to care. Oh, how I long sometimes to bear you a child—a love-child—whom we could watch over and—but that is madness! I know how impossible that is! I know how many serious things confront us in real life and so I thank God that I have my dream-island to which I can fly when serious things become too oppressive. Dearest, I love you! I can think only of how dearly I love you. Everything else in my life builds itself around that one sweet thought. It *is* my life. I am too sublimely happy for any regrets. I feel so strong, so healthy, so tingling with life to the finger-tips. So as if I could carry mountains on my back!—all because of you, because I glory in my love for you, your mad, sweet love for me, because I *feel* so intensely all that you have taught me to understand—as I never did before. I am thinking of you every hour, dearest, wishing you happiness and success. I am going to sleep now, asking God to tell you how dearly, how much I love you because I *cannot* ever make you understand."

Ondricek, receiving these daily letters, replied to them—or some of them—with less spontaneous, less untroubled, but equally perfervid outpourings of his love, hopes, plans and imaginings. He had not wholly lost his sense of humor, or proportion. His talk with Allen brought him sharply face to face with the incongruous elements in his situation. This boy to whom he talked was a millionaire in his own right, would have immediately after graduation a position of power and influence. He himself had nothing in sight but a fifty-dollar-a-week job plus vague possibilities. His family were Czech peasants eking out a toilsome and dreary existence of a sort of which Evelyn, with her background of culture and luxury and family pride, could have no conception.

He was antipathetic to much that surrounded her. He saw her faults. He saw them dim and inconsequential beneath the

glow of their love. He felt all around him the tentacles of her love. He knew he was hopelessly enmeshed. When he had read her suggestion of his using her money, presumably in business, he had winced. There it was! As mistress he worshiped her. As lover she adored him. But if ever they should allow themselves—how avoid it?—to get all tangled up with family and business and living-expense and social—oh God!—if only—work. Work! That was the answer.

His letters took on a serious tone. Instantly she sensed the reason for it, grew frightened, wrote to him again and again that they two lived in a world of their own which he had created for her, where she loved to walk with him and dream of him and plan only for his happiness. Never would she allow anything to come into their lives to spoil the beauty of their love. They would talk it all over when he came to her again—with pages of explanations of how he would find her.

When Ondricek arrived at Evelyn's house late in the afternoon of the day before Christmas he found awaiting him nothing even remotely related to the picture she had painted, but three tables of bridge in the parlor and an exceedingly nervous hostess-mistress-mother. What he saw in her was of course but the reflection of his own disappointment struggling with her very live sense of obligation. The children had already been three days at home.

Allen had brought his friend, Gordon Bradley, a senior who had initiated Allen into the higher mysteries at Yale. Within three hours of Gordon's arrival he and Jane had found more points of possible contact than there are on two billiard balls. The Bradleys dealt in oil and lived across the park in Flatbush. Paul indistinctly remembered young Bradley as having been in one of his classes. Gordon was spending a few days at home before going on to visit an uncle in Chicago. Mr. Bradley's uncle's family were intimate with the Marshalls. Consequently Paul, during his visit, learned enough about Aunt Edith, Cousins Gloria and Herbert, Uncle Frank, Marie-Louise and Frankie Jr., their weights, appetites, quarrels, family scandals and self-complacency to last him comfortably for

the rest of his life. Edna Ferris was visiting Evelyn. Edna was enjoying an attack of the eat-and-grow-thin theory to complicate matters and furnish conversation. So Evelyn's house was full, as it should be over the holidays, with all bedrooms occupied and the cook the heroine of the hour.

The other bridge-players present and completely uninterested in Ondricek's arrival were friends of Allen and Jane. Ondricek was introduced to them. He bowed, mumbled, paying no attention to names, or faces. He felt sharply his strangeness here. He continued to feel it throughout his visit even in those rare moments when he was alone with Evelyn. At night, alone in his room, he would say: "One down; two down," and shake his head. On Wednesday night following Christmas Allen's engagement to Miss Holden would be announced to a waiting world. On Thursday morning he would escape to Marksville, Illinois!

Allen obviously put himself out to make Ondricek feel at home. The effort was too obvious. Not so Jane. Bohemian professors of mathematics had no place in her scheme of things; never would have. She was too well-trained, too respectful of her mother to betray open hostility. But her affected smile and casual remarks showed perfectly clearly that for her he was an interloper.

For the first time Ondricek could observe at first hand what seemed to him the shallow, meaningless conventionality of this whole environment of the woman he loved, this environment to which she for all the active years of her life had so complacently adapted herself, in which she fitted with obvious ease and enjoyment. He was over-critical, exaggerated the implication of things in themselves insignificant. Evelyn vaguely understood the cause of his silence, his depression. She was in a hopeless dilemma.

She had wanted them all about her, enjoying her home, her efforts to make them happy. Here they were—and nothing going as she had planned! Nothing as she had so intensely wished. When she did find an opportunity to be alone with her lover she found him morose, monosyllabic. For the life of her she could not put her finger on the cause of his discon-

tent. She pleaded with him to tell her why he was unhappy. He denied the obvious fact—a stupid thing to do. He did not know, himself, why he was sour. If he had tried to explain his discontent his explanations would have sounded ridiculous to himself. He could not explain it without saying that he did not now and never had known his own mind regarding her. That was absolutely not the fact—or was it?

On the night before Allen's party, at the end of an hour's talk, he begged her not to let what was in fact his own boorishness make her unhappy. His—his grouch had nothing to do with her, personally—with their own life together. It was only that he had made a mistake in injecting himself into an intimate family-party. That was the mistake. It was his own fault, not hers.

"Please," he said and stopped, seeing the tears in her eyes. Jane came in.

He did not confess when he said good-night to her in the small hours of Thursday morning after her gala-party had broken up and her house-guests were all in their various rooms that he was in the throes of a desperate ill-humor. Instead, he told her what a marvelous hostess she had proved herself, how splendidly she had managed everything, how adorable she had looked at the head of her table, how beautifully she had played. She thanked him, in turn, for the lovely, lovely toast he had made to Allen and Betty and told him how proud she had felt at that moment.

He did not confess that when he had sat beside her at dinner in the place of honor he had glanced down to the foot of the table and had seen her husband sitting there with one of those enormous napkins marked "F" spread over his waistcoat, scowling up at the butler because of a too-cold burgundy. He said nothing of thoughts that had come while Mrs. Henderson who sat at his right had driven him literally to drink with pleas for advice about her only boy—if only her boy were an Allen Ferris!—and he had watched Doctor Henderson opposite him joking hilariously with one of Jane's explosive classmates. He could not now tell Evelyn that the cold shadow of her past lay heavy upon him and made it physically

impossible to answer her silent pleading with the embrace she longed for—and which God knew she deserved.

Instead, he told her that she must not even think of getting up early to say good-by to him. She was too utterly worn-out. He had asked the maid to wake him. During these coming days in his old home he would be thinking of her constantly, would be longing for her. She must write him daily. He would stop off for a day on his way back. She replied in monosyllables, feeling far gloomier than he. When he had left she sat a long time staring at nothing at all wondering why she should feel so undeservedly and so completely wretched.

She did not get up to say good-by to him the following morning. He did not know until he received her first letter that she had listened to his footsteps as he went down the stair on his way out. He did not tell her in his reply that he had gone down through the silent, cold gloom of that house with a sense of enormous relief as though he were escaping from jail. He wrote of his happiness in his old boyhood home, of the pleasure his coming seemed to have brought them all, of his dear old mother, his two sisters, his two brothers, his father—whom Evelyn would like immensely when she once really learned to know the big-hearted man he was beneath his homely exterior. Some day he would tell her more about his father. He wrote of his return to her, of how eager he was to erase from her memory his absurd moodiness in her home.

It was the only reference he made to his three-day visit.

This single casual remark in no way deceived Evelyn. Love dulls perception in man. A woman in love is an incredibly sensitized mechanism. During Ondricek's absence Evelyn was thinking as intently as he on the problem of their relations, just as honestly, trying just as hard as he to be unselfish in her thinking, deluding herself with a comforting confidence in the basic common-sense of each. For the mystery of love lies precisely in this inexplicable tangle of supremely unselfish impulses with profoundly selfish motives.

While he, with a male's addiction to general principles, was

puzzling over what a man's relation to a woman really ought to be, things being as they are in the world, and what might happen to them ten years hence, she, being a woman, with a woman's practicality, was thinking, planning, deciding what she would do, what she would say, how she would look at the precise moment of his first appearance in the Pennsylvania station on his return. If he was a sailor who, having been hit by something of a hurricane, casts about him during a lull in an effort to determine by dead reckoning and obliterated stars where he is and what he is heading for, then she was a canny engineer who, equally aware of storm and danger, is far less concerned with horizon and direction than with keeping the machinery well oiled and all bolts tight.

In the course of his week at home Ondricek did a lot of so-called serious thinking. This so-called thinking kept leading him always around the same old circle to the same old question that has been dumbly put by lovers ever since man was fool enough to load himself up with real-estate. Only the orbits changed. What would he do in case—in case the thing got critical? At this distance that island of dreams about which he and Evelyn had burbled so much seemed pretty much of a fool's paradise.

He arrived in the Pennsylvania station on schedule to find Evelyn awaiting him. He had, therefore, before him a more or less immediate opportunity to discuss with Evelyn clearly, sensibly, all these sensible conclusions at which he had arrived. He had decided to go, provided she invited him, over to Brooklyn and there in her house which symbolized for him all of the more unpleasant possibilities in their situation to explain to her with perfect frankness precisely how he looked at their affair—just so that there could be no misunderstanding about it. When he saw her, hurrying to meet him, waving eagerly from a little distance down the platform quite a number of his sensible conclusions seemed less obviously sensible, being dimmed by the fresh realization that here beckoning to him was one of those priceless women who give without first estimating costs or asking-price. Immediately she told him, laughing with entrancing deviltry, how she had run away from

them all at home, was free to be with him where and how and for as long as he wished—only she would have to be back before morning. And what had he planned for them? And she had tickets for the opera, if he cared to go, or else they could just have dinner together and then they could go wherever he thought was the best place—and, oh, wasn't it wonderful?—What did he think was best to do?

Whatever he thought was very far from general principles.

When he was back at New Haven on the last lap of his career as college professor the memory of his visit in Evelyn's home grew dim because of this night which had dropped like a curtain of light between then and now. And the only false assumption he made in his references to the future was that Evelyn was wiser than she was in point of fact, better able and more willing to look from a disattached viewpoint at a love-affair between two presumably intelligent people with their childhood a long way behind them, free agents with open eyes and a suitable respect for conventional morality.

She tried hard to follow him; told him in her replies how when he was settled in his work in New York they could be together practically whenever he wished, how then they could talk to their hearts' content, how she would make him work terribly hard because of the great things she wanted him to do in the world. She was simply crazy to see this cathedral design about which he wrote. Would he send her some beginner's book from which she could learn something about architecture? The thought of his creating these things of beauty thrilled her. Her lover!

It was his suggestion that they celebrate together the completion of his work at Yale. A dedication, as it were. A casting of the auguries, a religious celebration before entering upon a new quest. She wrote a long letter of acceptance, telling him to plan everything and not tell her a thing about it, but just take her away with him out of the world. He would see how gladly she would go!

He fixed on Saturday, the thirteenth of February, for on that day at noon he would finish his work at college. He received a long telegram asking him to postpone their trip till

the next week because that particular week-end was taken up by all sorts of things and it would be so much better for them both one week later. He wrote back that it was a little difficult for him to see anything so important in "all sorts of things" that she should allow them to interfere—however, what was the earliest definite date on which she felt she would get away from "all sorts of things"? She told him in the merriest letter she had ever written him that it would be on Thursday the eighteenth; that he was a dear stupid and that she would do nothing between now and then but think of how happy they were going to be.

So Ondricek's farewell to his colleagues and his work at Yale were always very indistinct in his memory, confused as they were with his impatience for the days that were to follow. For Evelyn was to meet him Thursday noon at the Grand Central station and they were to start immediately on their voyage of discovery.

When he came upon her sitting alone on one of the benches of the waiting-room where she had told him he would find her, that single bag at her feet which he had asked her to bring, wrapped in her great chinchilla coat, her gray hair peeping out from a close-fitting turban of fur, her eyes wandering restlessly about in search of him, he gave an exclamation of delight at the sight of her. And indeed well he might, for she had never in her life looked more alluring than she did at this moment and had never felt more eager for whatever lay ahead.

The early midwinter night had already closed down on them when they arrived at the terminus of a spur of the Harlem road. She did not yet know where he was taking her except that it was to a village off the railroad hidden away among the hills and fir-forests of the lower Berkshires. She did not want to know where she was going. Somewhere into this snow-covered world of silence and loveliness.

A boy greeted Ondricek and took their two bags. He led them to a box-sleigh hitched to a team of heavily blanketed horses which neighed impatiently and stamped their forefeet causing a merry tinkling from two necklaces of bells.

A lighted lantern dangled from the wagon-pole. They climbed to the seat and buried their feet in straw. The boy threw their bags to the wagon-bottom, unblanketed and unhitched the team. They glided down a dark village street between rows of silent houses from behind the closed shutters of which shone yellow slits of lamplight. They shuddered against each other, wrapped tight in their heavy woolen blanket, but from delight, not cold. They laughed aloud. They came out into open spaces.

The air was bitter cold, but clear and with a wine-like tang; the sky ablaze with stars. They slid rapidly along the narrow winding ribbon of road between crowding shadowy slopes. The boy sang constantly to his straining team "hey-ho-hey" to the rhythmic tinkling of sleigh bells. The crusted snow crunched protests beneath the runners. The heavy box-sleigh creaked in its age-stiffened joints. Around them white silence and a world of shadows and they so warm, so close, so alone and so alive!

Their first exclamations lapsed into murmurous content and died into silence. The cold prevented talk. They did not wish to talk. Evelyn hid her face in her coat and closed her eyes. She was gliding into an enchanted night warmed and lighted by her love for this man whose arms, clasped tight around her, were bearing her swiftly, strongly to her fairy-island in a fabled sea where she would live for him alone.

Ondricek cried out: "Look! A shooting star!"

Evelyn, being half asleep and with a vague idea of having ridden for hours and hours, tried to get untangled quickly enough to see it—and failed. So she missed this chance of having a great good-fortune befall her, for it had fallen, he declared, directly over her right shoulder. But this waked her up. She saw lights winking at them through the darkness ahead and below. The boy said they'd soon be home. "Home!" whispered Evelyn, tightening her arms about Ondricek.

They sped past a black mass which the boy said was the village-church. They slid down a sharp grade in the road past a grocery-store through the frosted window of which they

saw men seated around a stove. They stopped before the little inn where Ondricek had engaged a room for their three days' stay.

The delight of this! A German-American landlord who was village justice of the peace. The wife, he explained, did all the cooking. Other people? No!—They ought to come in August. Well, their room had a stove in it. And plenty to eat in the house. He remembered Professor Ondricek from two years before; remembered the big fish he had caught in Stony Brook. He and his wife were a little overpolite to Mrs. Ondricek. They weren't blind. It was none of their business. Could be a honeymoon.

What a dinner! And what an appetite they had for it! And what a cocktail they discovered in the repertory of their host! An old-fashioned whisky-cocktail with a wholly exotic flavor. Never had Ondricek suspected the possibilities in an old-fashioned whisky-cocktail! When at length they had ceased to eat and Evelyn, in spite of Ondricek's look of protest, had lighted a cigarette right under their landlady's nose, they sat for a while and pretended a great interest in that part of the state of Connecticut. Then Ondricek, with an air of sober decision, declared that in view of all this tramping they were going to do the following day they ought to get right to bed and have a good night's sleep. And this sage remark made Evelyn herself burst into laughter along with the landlord and his wife, for three minutes had not passed since she had declared that in all probability she would not sleep a single wink that night because of all the coffee she had drunk—but who could resist such coffee after such a ride? But Ondricek didn't get the joke. They went up to their room with its low ceiling and broad, white-scrubbed floor-boards covered with rag-rugs, its two white-curtained, tight-shut windows, its old-fashioned wooden bed bulging high with feather-beds and patchwork quilts. The air, hot and stuffy, was odorous from fir-chunks blazing merrily in their little cylinder-stove.

They prepared for bed. Then Evelyn sprang the first of her little surprises by fishing from her bag a bottle of yellow chartreuse. Now, said she, he would understand why she

had kept begging him to be so careful of her grip! By luck he had a corkscrew attached to the back of his pocket-knife so they didn't need to call for help. For Evelyn could easily understand, could she not, why chartreuse on such occasions as this should always be taken directly into one's system from the neck of the bottle?

Good luck for them that their bedroom was in the back of the house over the kitchen and at a great distance from the living-room stove where the landlord was at that moment sitting with his wife! Because Evelyn's tongue got stuck in the bottle and she started laughing and couldn't stop and a lot of the precious liqueur spilled over her neck and breast and pajama-top which Paul insisted on trying to save regardless of costs and consequences.

Finally she tried to get into this bed. And couldn't. She made Paul bring a chair on which she stood while he balanced her and counted three. Then she jumped into a mountain of feathers and all but sank from sight, and cried out to him to save her. Which he did by blowing out the lamp and running to one of the windows and raising it wide open so that an icy blast of February night blew in to make her shiver and moan till he would come and get her warm again. And there was nothing left for them then to do but to keep terribly close to each other for self-protection because within three minutes from the time he had opened that window the air in their room was one hundred degrees below zero.

Next morning when they were faced with various problems, for example that of getting up and dressing in this refrigerator, it was still more delightfully terrible. For the temperature beyond their nest of feathers and wool, as far as Evelyn could judge from the way the tip of her nose felt and from a single second's exposure of one toe, was still at least one hundred degrees below zero—and the window still wide open. When she huhed out her breath little clouds of steam flew up into the sunshine—for the sun was streaming into their window and she was ashamed even to look at her watch. What about all their pretense of wanting to be up so early and do all that walking?

As far as she was concerned she would lie there forever unless somebody would come along and close that window. She wished she could lie there forever, anyway—only she was so hungry! And why had she never slept before in a feather-bed? What was all this humbug about hair-mattresses and box-springs? Jiminy, this was heaven! And would he *never* get up? Had he no shame in him; no mercy?

While they breakfasted, with Mrs. Justice-of-the peace bustling back and forth from dining-room to kitchen, Evelyn kept groaning that here was a whole winter's work gone to pot. This breakfast alone would spoil a month's hard exercise.

The unforgettable hours of those three days alone!

They had tramped over the packed snow of a lumberman's trail which wound up and up a narrow forest-valley along the bank of a stream invisible beneath its roof of ice and snow. They had come to a spot walled about with limbs of fir pinned down beneath masses of crusted snow. He had spread out the woolen blanket he had carried and they had sat there, hearing only the murmurous sighing of the wind to the firs on the slopes above them, letting the beauty and the silence of the forest flow in upon them, its harmony and its peace. Each, struck at the same time by the thought that this was an hour which never would return and that, come what might, the memory of this time and place would never die, turned to look at the other. And so their glances met. He drew her face very gently to his and kissed her very reverently on the mouth and said:

"It was a moment like this, Eve, which Faust knew to be payment in full for the price of his soul."

But Evelyn had her Faust via Gounod and the Metropolitan Opera House. She had never heard of the doctor's affair with Helen of Troy, nor of the happy outcome of his famous dicker. So she missed the point. She missed a good many of Paul's classical allusions. She declared:

"But he forgot all his pretty speeches fast enough when poor little Marguerite ceased to amuse him!"

Ondricek laughed protestingly.

"But I'm way at the end of the second part! Poor Marguerite belongs to the past—the past of both of us. I am with Helen of Troy, eternal—and therefore you—as I am Faust."

"No. No! I never liked that fellow! I like Mephisto. Be my Mephisto, but for heaven's sake don't be my Faust!"

They met on their return a group of children with sleds at the top of a steep slope in the village street and Ondricek bribed them to let him and Evelyn coast down hill on two of their sleds. Evelyn shrieked with delight. They did it again and again.

On Sunday they borrowed leggings and waded through unbroken snow along an all but obliterated road to a little lake in the hills. They walked and slid around its whole circumference and arrived back at the inn late for dinner and Evelyn half dead with fatigue. So they went up immediately to their room. There they loafed and smoked and talked throughout the whole gray February afternoon, for more snow was threatening and Ondricek, as he stuffed fir-chunks into their wood-stove, chuckled over the possibility of their being snowed in up here and having to remain, lost to the world, till the first of March. But Evelyn, curled on their bed, drugged by happiness, weariness and the stuffy air, protested drowsily that she had to be back in Brooklyn on Tuesday if it took an aeroplane to get her there because on Tuesday she was going to get rid of a lot of tiresome old Brooklynites by giving a tea at the Woman's Club—Well, and how about all this work he had been talking about?

"Slave-driver! Can't I talk about work—theoretically? The joy of work is in ratio to its distance. The farther away the greater the joy. But the joy of woman is in ratio to her nearness, which you understand thoroughly, don't you, you precious little devil? Make room for me!—Work is an accident controlled by absurdity. It has no place in nature. Lovers have made the earth and made it beautiful for lovers alone. Who ever thought of work before man went insane? Kiss me!"

"I think you're a little crazy yourself."
"Of course I am! Else how could I be so happy?"

6

For Ondricek this week-end which he and Evelyn had spent together in the hills became the background against which all his subsequent acts were thrown in strong relief, back of which he could think only vaguely and with difficulty. For three days she had lived with him away from all that environment of which she had previously been for him a part. She had proved herself an adorable comrade. He saw how swiftly and how well she could adapt herself to conditions wholly strange, saw how unfounded in fact was his fear that creature-comforts and conventional niceties were necessary to her content; saw with what girlish delight she had entered into the spirit of their adventure. The woman who had been so happy with him in that little village-hotel-room and in the snow and cold of February hills would not shrink from hardships if hardships were the necessary price for their life together. His new admiration for her as a woman, stripped of all the accidents of life, lent a depth to his passion which it had not had before.

For Evelyn this week-end was a focus toward which had converged every circumstance of her previous life and which cast its light over everything ahead. For it was in terms of these days alone with him that she, too, thought of life as a whole with her lover; as something apart from the matter-of-factness of daily existence, incomparably more beautiful and significant; a life which could raise her to heights the thought of which frightened while it delighted her lest something happen to plunge her down to earth again and prove it only a dream. She did no puzzling over theoretical sacrifices.

She had sat with him during that Monday morning-ride back to New York, had held his arm tight in hers and listened to his grave talk, thrilling with delight sharpened by fear. For he had discussed with her during all that long ride the pros and cons of marriage. She had let him do all the talking.

She had only kept his arm clasped tight in hers and had nodded her head, or replied in monosyllables, trying honestly to follow his reasoning, knowing with a woman's infallible instinct that her best answer to all this theorizing was just the simple fact of her being there, very, very close to him.

He had tried to explain why he was afraid of marriage—because of her obligations to her family, and his obligation to the work ahead of him. For now his desire to make good was intense because of his love for her. She had not interrupted him to tell him that he was foolish to let the question of earnings interfere with their happiness. She had only nodded her head and wondered why in the world he was making it all so uselessly difficult. Did she not have money aplenty for them both? Would she ever interfere with his work? Would she ever bother him with her family? Why? How? It would be so easy for her to manage if he would only let her! Why all this talk about his life and her life and his work and her work and his problems and her problems? Couldn't they work that all out together in the light and strength of their love?

He had talked of his longing that some day she would bear him a child. And had she not told him of her own intense yearning for him and for it in every way a woman can tell the man she passionately loves? Why did he insist on making it so hard for them both with his pride and, and—was it obstinacy?

She would be patient—the precious, precious time they were losing!—She would do as he asked her, would help him, would watch his effort, wait for him, make delightful for him these stolen days until the time came when they could throw all this bothersome caution to the winds. Somehow she would show him the meaninglessness of this bugbear of her wealth. Could he not see that it meant nothing to her? She could do no more than tell him so until he would let her prove it to him. Of course she was willing to live wherever he wanted her to live. She couldn't burn her house. It was a perfectly good house. He was such a foolish, foolish dear!

A year, he had said—two years. (Didn't he realize she was

forty-three, and every year priceless?) And she had merely squeezed his arm and smiled bravely into his eyes and said that all he had been telling her made her inexpressibly proud and happy because she could see from it how deeply he loved her. The love she bore him was its own reward. Something kept telling her, said she, that things would work out beyond his expectations and make all this wonderful dream which he had pictured of their life together come suddenly true.

So Ondricek plunged into his work with the engineering firm of Crandall and Tarbell. And Evelyn, having erased an accumulation of social obligations by her bridge-tea at the Woman's Club, ranged her life about her now close association with Ondricek. It required little planning to keep those evenings free on which he could be with her.

Her pleasure now at a symphony concert, or opera, or play was enormously increased by her discussions with him of the program, of the excellence of the artists, the significance of the play. He analyzed for her. He sharpened her thoughts. She astonished herself by her ability to defend her own interpretation. His comments brought into their discussions the verdict of critics and thinkers with whose appraisements he was familiar; hers the native taste with which her ancestors and her own experience had equipped her. Because she saw that her judgment coincided so often with his and with those whom he quoted she began to feel, as never before, confidence in herself and in her ability to estimate worth. In this new confidence was rooted her sense of buoyancy, of strength. She began to estimate people and problems with far greater clearness. Her thinking became less muddled, less superficial. She learned to express herself. She lost something in this process; she gained much. She became less impulsive, but far better able to make decisions.

She began to understand Paul himself far better, to see his faults as well as his virtues. She ceased to take at one hundred per cent every one of his statements and valuations. She began to appreciate the nature of the differences between them. She saw nothing in these differences antagonistic to her love. She did see in him an impracticality, a helplessness

in matters of domestic economy. She would mother him. She saw an asperity. She would sweeten him. A defiance of order and convention, a—was it a lack of breeding? She would civilize her wonderful savage! In spite of his knowledge of philosophy and science and of this and that he seemed to her often only a boy.

She wrote long letters to her children, more often to Allen than to Jane, since Allen's letters to her were so much more intimate than Jane's. They were both to be at home again over the Easter holidays. Edith and Gloria were also coming next month for a long-promised visit. Gloria had just filed papers for divorce from her Wisconsin lumberman and wanted to dodge reporters for a while.

During these weeks Paul completed his design for the proposed Detroit cathedral. Evelyn studied Paul's drawings, felt awe at her lover's creative genius, tried to picture this great structure standing at the entrance to Detroit's new park, an object of wonder to all the world. The firm had obtained the contract to build a plant near Pittsburgh for a pulp-and-paper concern and Ondricek had arranged to go with Tom Crandall early in March to spend several weeks on this job for practical experience.

Paul saw no ghosts lurking now in the shadows of Evelyn's dining-room when he sat with her at a table made as small as possible for them two alone and ate of some dish which she had learned he liked especially well and which she had her cook prepare for him in precisely the right way at precisely the right time. He talked with her then of his work, his associates, his plans. He discussed with her the technicalities involved in his cathedral-design unconscious of how much of his talk was Greek to her and of the mental effort it required on her part to get even a hazy idea of what he was trying to convey. She listened to him intently, her forehead wrinkled with that little frown which lent to her face such a fascination for him. Again and again he exclaimed that she was an inspiration sent to him by the gods, that if what he now did was not good then he himself was shoddy.

One night Evelyn had a boy of eight or ten with them for

dinner. She told Paul that this was the son of her old maid, Anna Menosky, about whom she had spoken so often and who was now a dressmaker and doing very well indeed. They two would watch over little John's education and Ondricek must always advise her what to do. Would he? Didn't Paul think he was a dear little fellow? "Why, yes," said Ondricek staring curiously at Anna Menosky's tow-haired accident. He felt gently closing around him the silver, silken net she was weaving so unconscious of the process itself.

On the evening before Ondricek left for his job in western Pennsylvania they talked of these weeks together which had slipped past like so many hours, of the day of his return, of how they would fill the long, empty weeks ahead with thoughts of each other which would help hurry the time away and keep them close in spite of the distance between. When Paul waved a last good-by to her as she stood within her lighted doorway he felt a lump in his throat and the pricking of tears from an overwhelming sense of the unpayable debt of love and gratitude beneath which she had buried him.

Never a moment's jar in these four weeks during which they had been so close since those unforgettable days together in the Connecticut hills. Not a second's unpleasantness, not a shadow to dim the brightness of her effigy. A glorious woman, a beautiful woman, at once proud and humble, mother and mistress, bold and timid, sensible and reckless, but so sensitive, so courageous, so inexhaustible! A little time, thought he, to make good—and then!

So he thought as his taxi jolted over pavements that to him were air; so he thought as he climbed to his curtained berth, rolled his clothes into bundles of cloth and stuffed them into nets, lay on his lurching bunk and felt himself being hurled on through the night farther and farther away from her.

And Evelyn, alone now in her suddenly empty house, reveled, too, in the thought of their happiness together, resolutely pushing into the background the insistent reflection that on that day she should have been unwell—and wasn't—and had consulted her calendar and had been hoping all day that her fears about those unforgettable days in Connecticut would be

proven groundless. For she had been most reckless when she should have been most careful and who should know better than she the risks involved? But to-night she would not think, or worry. This night she would not spoil with perhaps wholly imaginary fears. She had had a strong impulse to tell him, ask his advice in case—in case— But she could not spoil their last evening together for so long a time! Why should she worry him—or herself? To-morrow would—be to-morrow.

As she turned off her light and lay alone in her great, comfy bed she thought of her lover in his stuffy little Pullman-berth being whirled farther and farther away from her. She tried to follow him in his flight, tried to think only of how passionately she loved him, of how measurelessly happy they had been together. And didn't succeed so well. In a way she was more passionately happy than he, for thoughts were more physical and real to her than to him. But her happiness was tinged by an old, insistent fear.

On the following day her fear increased. By the time she received his telegram telling her that he was on the job prouder and happier than he had ever been in his life, her own happiness had been sadly frayed by worry. Another day passed, and then another. Then Evelyn sat down with her worry and looked it over and tried to reason things out. So many things that confused her and left her enmeshed in doubt!

Although she did not mention, in the many-paged letter she wrote him that day, the real cause of her gloom and lonesomeness, had Ondricek's practical common-sense not been worm-eaten with dreams and not functioning at the time, he would have read between its lines that something very different from general principles was worrying her. But he didn't. What has a man to do with a calendar? He, too, wrote at length.

He told her that her letter was the most beautiful she had ever written him—but so sadly beautiful! Why all this nonsense about her age? She had made him forget that age meant anything whatever. She was the eternal girl-woman. She was a living part of eternal beauty. He worshiped the beauty of her body! He reverenced the beauty of her soul!

What had years to do with her? Yes! She would bear him children. They must be patient. He needed, now, his whole thought and mind free for his work. He had so much to accomplish—for her sake! The thought of her, his love for her was close beneath and behind everything he did, or planned.

She must not think him foolish, to see barriers where none existed. He did feel, not barriers exactly, but distances between them. It was his fault, not hers! These he must wipe out. She understood that—perfectly, did she not? Only till then must they wait. Until he had made good. Until then he would remain her lover, bound to her by ties infinitely more sacred and real than any formula of a court, or church.

Evelyn, reading this long letter again and again, tried to determine from it precisely what she ought to do if she was pregnant, in view of what he would do, or want to do if he should learn that such was the fact. For the first time since she had known Ondricek she was impatient with his impracticality. His letter was so indefinite when what she desperately needed was immediate, concrete advice! Why couldn't he marry her if he wanted to? Why all this rigmarole? It might take him ten years to get where he might feel he could —it was silly! All so silly! He didn't want to marry her—that was the trouble!

She wouldn't go on this way. She couldn't! If she were pregnant, this minute? She would—what would she do? What must she do? She must tell him! Tell him frankly the facts and ask him to decide what she should do. Then all her pride rose flaming against the possibility of dragging him into an unwilling marriage with her. Never! She had gone into this on her own responsibility. She must face the consequences. The meaning of his letter was plain enough. She knew his theories, had thought them quite sensible. And now? Desperately she thought over the mistakes of her marriage with John Ferris. Desperately she determined never to permit a recurrence of those mistakes.

In the weeks that followed she prayed that her fear was baseless; that her irregularity was due to age, to nervousness, to—to anything in the world but this threat to her happiness.

And all the while she longed for this child which at that moment might be growing within her—she thought of it as such—this love-child, this incontestable proof of love, this bond between them, more sacred, not only than formula of court, or church, but than all he had talked about, or reckoned with. Again and again the powerful impulse to tell him battled with her pride and sensitiveness. For as passionately as she wanted him, still more passionately did she want him to want her.

All her past experience had focussed her love for Paul on this. In this lay the glory of her love; in complete self-surrender to a man who found in it and in her something divinely beautiful, whose worship miraculously lifted her up and beyond the petty facts of actuality to make her seem to herself at least something of what he seemed to see in her. This she had told herself again and again she would guard at any cost; if need be, of life itself.

When this element in woman's love—which enters always, but sometimes faintly—dominates, as in Evelyn's case, her every motive, then the love of woman becomes a fearful and a wonderful thing which no male can understand or fathom.

Her letters to him contained but the vaguest hints of her speculations. She wrote of how she longed for his return and for the chance to talk with him of her pressing problems, of his work and their future. She told him of what she did from day to day, how she was preparing her house and planning for the visit of her sister and niece and for the Easter holidays of her children. She could not talk of this bitter conflict within her to him who was the one person in all the world to whom she longed to talk with desperate intensity. To write to him at all required greater and greater effort.

On the eighth of April she lay in bed all day, feverishly awaiting that which did not come. In four days Edith and Gloria would arrive. From then on for a month she would have them in her house. In the following week her children, then Paul, and—she must do something! She must know. Then she would be able to decide what to do.

She knew no other physician than Henderson. The thought

of telling Doctor Henderson what she feared, of having him —she could not! Some stranger. Her fears of pain, of danger made her shrink from this alternative. Doctor Beebe. He had married her. He was a clergyman. He would help her. Her pride dismissed this thought. Her father—never! If only old Doctor Ogilvie were alive! A nephew of Doctor Ogilvie had taken over his uncle's practice. She decided to consult this man. She had never seen him. The fact that his name was Ogilvie gave her confidence.

She looked up his telephone-number and left word for him to call at her home as soon as possible. Then she rose, bathed, had her maid freshen her bed and waited for Doctor Ogilvie's coming with a rapidly mounting nervousness that culminated in dismay at her first sight of him entering her bedroom. She had his uncle's gray beard and shrewd, kindly eyes in her memory. She saw before her a dapper young fellow making an effort to appear at ease. Instantly she decided to pretend a chill, or a headache, or something or other and get rid of him. She could never talk to this boy! She would die.

So Doctor Ogilvie thermometered and stethoscoped her, tried without success to find some indication of illness, wrote out a harmless prescription and went away again wondering whether he had ever had a patient at once more attractive and a bigger damn-fool. Also whether he had made a hit with her. He could use a few more of these imaginative society ladies to balance up the rapidly increasing costs of being respectable.

On his return home for dinner that evening Doctor Ogilvie found awaiting him another hurry-call from Mrs. Ferris.

By chance Anna Menosky had come to call on her benefactress just as Doctor Ogilvie had left the house. Anna, who had a sentimental interest in old Doctor Ogilvie's nephew, had told Evelyn that this was the same man who doctored two of the ladies for whom Anna did dressmaking for some queer trouble they had inside of them. Now Evelyn knew one of these ladies quite well—or had thought she did. She had called up her friend at once to ask what Dr. Craig's next topic was going to be in the Brooklyn Institute's current events

class and had found out how wonderful young Doctor Ogilvie really was and what a brilliant future he had before him as Brooklyn's leading gynecologist. Then Evelyn had gotten rid of Anna, thrown herself on her couch and convinced herself that her case was desperate. Then she had written that letter to Paul which she had been longing to write for the past month—a long, rambling letter giving him the true picture of her month of anxiety and doubt and conflicting impulses.

She had told him of her decision to consult a doctor yet that evening. She would let him know the result. She hated to worry him with all this. But if she didn't tell him—oh, if he could only be there with her to give her courage and advice! She had hastily sealed this letter and sent it out with her maid. She knew that if she reread it she would never mail it.

Then she had called up Doctor Ogilvie.

Doctor Ogilvie hurried over to Mrs. Ferris' home opposite the park wondering what the devil this obviously healthy silly-head was now imagining to be the matter with herself.

As Doctor Ogilvie left Mrs. Ferris' home opposite the park that evening and climbed into his car and stepped on the self-starter and recollected that he was due at the house of an every day, garden-variety of diabetic he did it all in a profoundly reflective as well as a pleasant frame of mind—reflective since he had just had before his physical and still had before his mental retina a most effective stimulus to reflection along the lines both of current morality and comparative physiology. And since he had made an equally lucrative appointment with Mrs. Ferris for the following morning and was going to write her name in very black ink on the slowly lengthening list of his more exclusive clientele, Doctor Ogilvie's reflections along the line of current morality had a pleasant tinge.

While Doctor Ogilvie was methodically transferring to Mrs. Evelyn G. Ferris' card such facts as he had noted—age, forty; widow; children, three; menstruation, regular; lacerations; uterus, pronounced retroflection—and so on and

so forth—Evelyn was writing page after page of a second letter to Ondricek. As she wrote she gripped a tiny ball of a handkerchief with which from time to time she kept foolish tears from blotting out her words as well as her vision.

She was telling him of the desperate struggle it had cost her to face this thing which was now a certainty, to decide on what was best to do, of how she hoped he would love her for it. For she was going to be very brave and think only of him, and the pain would be only a small price to pay for all the happiness they had had together. Only—if anything should happen—but the doctor said it wouldn't, that hundreds of women went through this in Brooklyn every day almost. And he was a gynecologist. He had said that she was in the most wonderful physical condition. Only she was such a coward at heart! But that wasn't the cause of her sadness. It was because she was about to destroy something which God had sent to them both and which was a part of him, as well as of her, so infinitely precious to her that he must know by this act of hers, for which so many would condemn her, if by nothing else she had ever done or could do, how above everything she held dear on earth was the love she bore him. Never, never would she have the heart to do this, but for the fact that she knew how great was his love for her and that they could still have their baby in the years to come. Because the doctor had told her that her body was like a young girl's and that if he knew anything whatever about women she had many years ahead of her of possible motherhood. And he was a gynecologist. Paul must not worry.

She would telegraph him the moment it was over and she was safe. Then he must write her a long, long letter, oh so full of love and comfort—for she would need both so terribly much more than she had needed anything in all her life!

7

On the following evening Evelyn's first letter was awaiting Ondricek alongside his plate at the dinner-table in the little hotel at which he and Tom Crandall were stopping.

When Ondricek put it hastily into his pocket, unopened, his friend laughed and exclaimed:

"Another one! My God, why don't you marry her?"

Ondricek flushed, muttered: "Don't be an ass!" and went on with his explanation of the mathematics involved in a flying buttress.

When later in his room he had finished reading this letter he sat for a long time with its pages strewn on the table beside him and tried to realize what had struck him. Here were no convenient formulas to simplify the operation and determine values. Here squarely in front of him was the precise leap which he had dreaded from a distance. Here was her letter, precisely that effort to face the thing bravely and generously which he knew she would make. So vividly could he see her before him, her big, grave eyes looking frankly into his, full of all her terrible dilemma! Here was her question: the question he had asked himself a hundred times and never answered: What did he want her to do? Another question, not in her letter, but staring at him from its every line—what ought he to do?

Why hadn't she told him before! What a fool he had been not to have suspected this from a score of things she had written him during these weeks! And here he was stuck five hundred miles away from her at a moment when above all other times imaginable he ought to be sitting with her, discussing this thing. Did she want this child—or him?

This doctor. He winced as if some one had pricked him with the point of a knife. Henderson. She had not mentioned his name. It must be. No. She couldn't do that! She couldn't—he jumped up. He must talk with her! This wasn't a thing to—to—write letters about! He put in a call with long-distance and sat down to read again her long outpouring.

And, now, with the shock of her news subsided, with the moment immediately ahead when he would hear her voice, tell her she was not alone, the whole problem became suddenly simple. He knew perfectly well what she wanted. He knew what he wanted. He knew what he ought to do—and would

do. This mistress-business was damned nonsense. He loved her. He wanted her. He wanted her now a thousand times more than he had ever wanted her. It was idiocy—this playing with the thought of abortion.

He paced nervously about, quarreled with the operator because of her slowness, saw that it was still early in the evening, felt his impatience mounting to a fever. What did he care about costs, or living-problems, or this, or that? Here was fact: fact which had suddenly filled him with an uncontrollable eagerness.

At length the bell of his telephone rang. Evelyn's downstairs maid was on the phone. No. Mrs. Ferris had gone out of town. She had not said where she was going. She wanted to have a complete rest for a day or two. No. She was not at Stamford. She thought Mrs. Ferris was in New Jersey somewhere with friends. Did he wish to leave any message in case Mrs. Ferris telephoned in?

Ondricek, baffled, angry, tortured by a thousand possibilities went up to his room to try to think sanely of the situation. New Jersey! Why had she gone to New Jersey? With whom? To leave him this way to eat his heart out without— Was she trying to avoid him? Feverishly he reread parts of her letter. In spite of his semi-delirium he could see that it was foolish to suspect her of acting, at this moment, capriciously. Perhaps at this very moment— He clenched his hands and ground his teeth in protest, dread, and passionate love for her.

He did not know that Evelyn lay at that moment asleep in her bed, with the stabbing pain of her operation behind her, exhausted, but quiet now from an immense relief, having fallen asleep with a smile on her lips because she believed that she had done a supremely brave thing for the sake of the man she loved. He did not know that Mrs. Ferris' nurse had given the maid Mrs. Ferris' orders to give out this fiction about her being out of town to any one who called during the next day or two. Nor that Doctor Ogilvie, before leaving the house that afternoon, had given strict command that on no pretext

whatever was Mrs. Ferris to be disturbed by anything or anybody.

At length Ondricek's underlying faith in Evelyn's good sense calmed him. She would not leave him long in this uncertainty. She would telegraph, or call, or write. To-morrow he would have a letter of explanation. In the meantime he had something burning on his lips to tell her, something that stood out in the glow of this new and wonderful revelation of herself to him.

What he said in many pages of words that flowed up from the very depths of him was that he, having been suddenly confronted by this fact of her pregnancy saw now clearly how petty and selfish and mistaken had been all his objections to marriage. He told her how doubly precious she had become now that she was not only a woman whom he passionately loved, but the mother-to-be of his child. He told her that the thought of this made all other things seem insignificant to him, that he would hurry to her at the earliest possible moment with a pride and hope immeasurable to decide with her on how best and when they should marry. For neither he nor she should think of any other alternative.

Early the following morning he awoke with the vision of her still clear and bright before him. He went out for a walk before breakfast, smelled spring in the air, felt the upstarting of fresh sap within him. He mailed his letter, patting it as he dropped it into the box. He grinned, took a long breath, muttered:

"Now!—Now it's up to you!"

By you he meant himself.

When he returned from his walk a telegram awaited him. He tore it open.

"Everything all right. Miss you dreadfully."

It had been sent from Brooklyn. The cryptic message threw him again into a fever. He put in a call for Brooklyn.

Tom Crandall joined him. As they sat at breakfast their morning mail was brought to them. In it was Evelyn's second letter. Ondricek did not put this letter in his pocket and go on talking about mathematics. It was perfectly obvious to

Crandall that something serious had happened. He said nothing, read the paper beside his plate, tried not to notice the acute distress in Ondricek's face. At length he had to speak. Ondricek sat as if he had been hit by a club.

"If it's anything, old man, that you need to—to attend to, don't hesitate about—anything here—or me."

Ondricek shook his head, drunkenly.

"Nothing I have to attend to—nothing—whatever. Nothing." He repeated the word, idiotically. He sat there staring at the plate in front of him. The waiter came.

"They have your call, Mr. Ondricek."

Crandall watched his friend go out to the booth. He reached over, pushed the sheets of Ondricek's letter together and put a plate on top of them. The corners of his mouth drew down comically.

"The old, old shell-game," he muttered.

Ondricek closed the door of the booth behind him. He had not the slightest idea of what to say. He had nothing to say. For a moment he held the receiver to his ear. Then he said hello as if he were coming out of a trance. A woman on the phone; a stranger. He thanked God it wasn't Evelyn. Mrs. Ferris was in her room. This was Mrs. Ferris' nurse. Mrs. Ferris wished her to thank him for having called. He need have no worry. Mrs. Ferris was doing nicely. If he would call to-morrow perhaps Mrs. Ferris would talk with him herself.

Ondricek said hastily it would be impossible for him to call to-morrow. He had a bitter taste in his mouth, bitter as gall. He told the woman to give his love to Mrs. Ferris and hung up. He sat for a full minute in the closed booth after he had done so.

He came out, gave his friend a stupid excuse for his behavior and went to work.

It would have been difficult for Ondricek to explain the reason for his mental torture during the two days that followed. Evelyn had merely done what he himself—up to within twenty hours of the time she had done it, had vaguely conjectured—was it hoped?—she would do in case they were

ever confronted by this situation. But never before these last twenty-four hours had he realized what effect her actual pregnancy would have on his whole outlook. It was something he had never before looked squarely in the face. Knowing perfectly well that any reproach from him in view of all the facts would be not only unjust but contemptible he kept repeating to himself: "My God! How *could* she have done it!"

The religious, or moral aspect of what she had done had nothing to do with the shock it gave him. That side of it never occurred to him. It was, on the contrary, the very fact of its being, as he knew, an everyday occurrence, regardless of moral theories, which in Evelyn's social stratum was looked upon as a termination of pregnancy pretty much a matter of course under unfavorable conditions that jarred terribly against the fragile structure of fantasy and romance in which he had enshrined her. Her act brought him plump against the bald facts of their situation. Try as he would to catch the spirit of her letter, he could not. Never could she have taken this step, he protested mentally, without at least first telling him about it unless—unless she had wanted to. What business had he dreaming along like a seventeen-year-old schoolboy? She was far more practical. She preferred to play safe. She was perfectly right!

He knew his bitterness was unjust. Yet it was there. When he reflected that the letter he had written her would at that minute be in her hands he had a physical chill. In the light of what she had done without consulting him, with such unnecessary haste, without waiting a single day to find out what he might do, or say, or wish, that letter to her which he had written in that hour which comes, if it comes at all but once in a lifetime, seemed to him grotesque in its absurdity. Some of the perfervid expressions of his letter occurred to him. With a sour grimace he called himself a god-damned, driveling sentimentalist.

Evelyn was still lying in her bed when her nurse brought Paul's letter to her. Save for a slight soreness, her pain had

disappeared. On the following day Edith and Gloria would arrive. She would be able to meet them without a trace in evidence of what she had gone through. It was over.

Her nurse had given her Ondricek's message. She was awaiting his letter with an eagerness even greater than her relief. She felt, now and then, twinges of regret like those physical reminders of what she had passed through. But she was looking ahead, now, not behind. And now it was only days, not weeks, that lay between her and her lover's promised return.

Not until she had read half through his long letter did she realize that he had written these words in ignorance of what she had done. When she was able to continue reading she read with tears streaming down her cheeks—tears equally of bitter regret because he, like herself, had lost something priceless and of happiness because of these to her divinely beautiful words which wiped out all barriers between them. Passionately she pressed his letter against her breasts, against her lips and vowed to make good this loss, to atone—

Oh, God, all her life she would atone! She would give him a baby. She would give him her life. A feeling of exaltation filled her. Hurt as he would be when he learned the truth he could not possibly suffer as she had suffered. She would dedicate her life to him. Her every thought and act save only what she must give her children would be his. These two could never interfere. Her love for each made stronger her love for the other. Had not Paul himself said that he could never have learned to love her so profoundly as a woman, were it not for his deep admiration for her as a mother? Now she would prove to him what a woman's love can mean!

In this spirit she answered his letter. She had done this terrible thing because she did not wish to become a burden to him, to leave him free and their love unfettered. How could she have ever dreamed that he would feel about it as he did? He had filled her so full of doubts and fears about marriage! Would she ever have had any doubts or fears had he not always talked as he had? His wonderful letter lay next to her heart as she was writing. She had wept bitter, bitter tears

over it. Yet it had made her prouder than any woman had ever been before for now she knew how much he loved her.

If what she had done made him change his mind about wishing to marry immediately she would understand. He was free to do as he wished. If he still wished it she would be proud and happy to be his wife. He would always be free. Yes. She would bear him children. Were there many women who had answered their lover as she did? She would give him the years that remained of her strength and youth. Only because she was ten years older than he did she have any fears of the future. Because of nothing else! But now she felt as he had once written: as if eternal youth were hers. And so for all the years of her life she would try to be for him all that he ever hoped for.

When she had finally stopped writing—since she had to stop somewhere, or else he would never read it all—she lay back on her pillow beneath which she had tucked the sheets of his letter, and confident of his decision, fell asleep.

Day after day she waited for his reply. In the meantime Edith came with Gloria and Marie-Louise. Never had her sister seemed to Evelyn so deadly uninteresting. Never had she realized the disagreeable superficiality of her niece Gloria. A hundred times she wished them anywhere in the world but in her home. She could not write again to Paul. She could only wait. Her confidence turned into fear. Her children came. The effort to conceal her anxiety beneath her welcome made her the more wretched during her moments alone. A week passed. One day as they were all seated at breakfast his letter came.

She hastily excused herself, hurried to her room and closed her door. She opened the envelope with a feeling of dread. And then, with tears again streaming down her cheeks, she realized that her confidence had not been mistaken; that her fears had been groundless.

He told her that he had not answered before because he had not been able to write until he had had time to think. He would not attempt to make her follow the tangled course of his thinking. One thing and one thing only remained clear

to him; namely, that it was utterly out of the question for him to put himself and his relations to Evelyn back beyond that night in which he had written her to marry him. He had no wish to do so. Her last letter had shown him again her greatness of soul. Far from making him change his mind about wishing to marry her, her letter had made him only the more eager to have her as his wife. But there was now no necessity for hurry. They would talk it all over on his return and decide together when and how they should marry.

For a long time after she had finished reading Evelyn sat trying to realize what this letter and what she would do because of it would mean to her life and the lives of all those about her. A knocking at the door startled her. Allen's voice. Mother! She had no idea of the time she had been sitting there. She called to him to come in. When he sat down on the couch beside her and she looked into the frank, troubled eyes of this boy of hers she put her arms about him and told him that she was going to marry this man whom he, her boy, had brought into her life.

She asked Allen to keep her secret faithfully since both she and Paul wished to marry very quietly—just when neither of them had decided. Maybe that fall. Allen asked: how about Jane? And Evelyn said she would have to tell Jane, too, so that Jane would have no cause to feel hurt. Allen was sure that Evelyn could have implicit confidence in Jane's loyalty.

So, later that day, Evelyn told Jane about it. Jane did not put her arms about Evelyn as Allen had done. She went to the window and stared out of it until Evelyn asked in a tone which she tried to keep perfectly calm and pleasant:

"Well, dear, have you nothing to say to me?"

Then Jane turned and Evelyn saw that there were tears in her eyes. But at the meaning of Jane's tears she could only guess. Jane said:

"I was thinking of papa." Then she did come and put her arms about her mother and kissed her and said: "I hope, mother dear, that you'll be happy. I have known, of course, all along that you two were great friends, but—but this comes —as a kind of shock to me."

Evelyn did not see the reflection of Jane's face in Jane's mirror up in Jane's room after Jane had left her, or hear Jane mutter:

"Ondricek; Ondricek!"

Nor did she ever know through all the years of her life that Allen asked Jane that night this single question:

"What do you think about it?"

And that Jane paused considerably longer than usual before replying and then said:

"If you want to know the plain truth, I think mother's a damn' fool—and you, too! It's your fault."

"Mine!"

"Yes! Yours. And that's the last word I'll ever say about it. It's none of my business."

8

A week later Ondricek rang the bell of Evelyn's home opposite the park. He had returned the night before. Evelyn had not met him. Her house was still full. Moreover Paul's last letter had made her indefinably unhappy. She could not understand why the fact that she had told her children about their plans should have displeased him. He had said "very much surprised." Why shouldn't she tell her children? He had telephoned her at noon, told her how happy he was to be back, how eager to see her. She had thrilled at the sound of his voice. She had asked him to come that evening to dinner.

During that whole evening a chill lay in the air. Paul was very courteous. Gloria immediately began trying out her old game on him. Gloria could not sit near a man and not start that kind of thing. Evelyn had already been disgusted by her ill-disguised sensual playing with Allen. Now she could feel Ondricek's annoyance—or thought she could. Edith reached the extreme of bad taste with her talk about Gloria's ex-husband. He was practically ex. Evelyn caught one or two of Jane's veiled thrusts, saw a certain expression flit once or twice over Jane's smiling face. Allen also was uncomfortable. He

didn't want to make any bulls. It was a stupid situation. Unnecessary.

Later in the evening Evelyn set the four of them at a bridge-table and took Ondricek with her into the library. They talked in low tones and guarded words. She tried to tell him what she had lived through during these weeks of his absence, how proud and happy he had made her. Her words seemed to herself matter-of-fact, not at all what she wanted to say. He tried, also, to talk. He didn't succeed much better than she. One can't talk about certain things convincingly when one is constantly conscious of the fact that dummy may stroll in at any moment.

On the following day they lunched together at a restaurant alone. There they talked until half the afternoon had slipped away and Evelyn had declared, after a startled glance at her watch, that she had already kept Edith waiting an hour at the chiropodist's. In the course of three hours they had agreed that there was no sense postponing what they both wanted to do immediately. They would marry as soon as they could complete necessary arrangements. Evelyn had already consented to Jane's plan of spending the summer in Europe with Edna. That solved the biggest problem. Allen was going to the Maine woods with Gordon Bradley. So Evelyn would close her house as soon as possible and go to Stamford for a visit. They would marry in her old home—with nobody there but old Doctor Beebe and her father and Aunt Pru. Then they would go away for a week-end honeymoon and return to their new life together.

In the meantime Paul would rent a little two-or-three-room apartment which they would furnish jointly, he using what he had, she supplying the balance with what was suitable from her house. Her share of living-expense and his they would discuss later. She had a plan all worked out about the children's inheritance. She had already discussed it with Mr. Johnson. She was going to sign over to Allen and Jane her entire interest in the chain-stores and her former husband's business. Some bonds that were her own she would keep. And Paul agreed that this was reasonable. It was a long time

before he knew what the amount was. She said they could decide later what to do with her house—since he refused absolutely to live in it. And didn't he think she was pretty good at planning things?

Capping all their agreements was one on which Evelyn insisted—the only difficult one to undertake—that they would remain apart until after their marriage. Ondricek had laughed and looked into the eyes of Evelyn. And in Evelyn's eyes lay an expression of joyous triumph. In Paul's eyes a look of mock despair.

All these arrangements apparently so simple when first suggested proved less simple in fact. They saw each other daily, either at lunch, or in the evening, or both. For five years, Evelyn kept repeating, they would marry—while she was still young and could bear him children. Then she would set him free. And Ondricek drank to these five years of paradise. Enough, he cried, for any man! Let the future take care of itself! It was these next five weeks that were an eternity. Then Evelyn, happy beyond expression at the impatience of her lover, would tell him that they must be good and keep to their resolution, or else, or else—what?

Five weeks passed and Mr. Johnson hadn't even begun to make out that stupid paper whereby Evelyn would deed over to Allen as trustee for himself and Jane all her right, title and interest in the Ferris leather-and-shoe-business. It seemed there were a lot of wholly unnecessary complications about it. It became a joke between them. Ondricek declared he would have none of her with the taint of old leather about her. She retorted that she had been pretty good at making shoes, but she had no idea how good she'd be at mixing concrete. Ondricek suggested she leave concrete to him and mix only bread and cocktails. Again and again he asked why in the world she was so foolish as to wish to marry him at all.

They leased a little five-room apartment overlooking Gramercy Park. Ondricek said that since Evelyn was coming down in the world on all counts she would have to content herself, as well, with looking at a smaller park. The rent

was absurdly out of proportion both to the space rented and Ondricek's income. But Ondricek was expert only at higher mathematics and Evelyn never had learned the principles of addition. Ondricek's salary had been raised fifty percent. Three hundred dollars a month, he exclaimed, would cover a multitude of sins. It was more than he had ever earned before. Three hundred dollars a month seemed also to Evelyn a lot of money for two people who planned to live in such absolute simplicity as they.

Together they arranged the furniture of their home. What to put into five rooms—or rather what to permit themselves? For first came Paul's books and the big leather reading-chair around which all the rest of the household must be centered. And what about Evelyn's books? For with Evelyn's piano which filled half the living-room and a center-table and her big standing-lamp and a music-cabinet and certainly a couch—but a couch was out of the question unless they put it in the entry, or on top of the bathtub! So Evelyn packed only a very few of her own special books like the white vellum Nibelungenlied and two or three big decorative folios to stand around on the floor and a little embossed leather set of Shakespeare which she would put on top of the shelves along with the vases. No room for twin beds. Twin beds!

Evelyn had discovered the darlingest white-and-pink-enameled affair, shell-shaped, with no footboard, which could serve as a day couch and had been modeled from the actual bed of Madame Pompadour who was nothing if not a woman of ideas. Evelyn gave Paul the salesman's account of this bed. Ondricek tried to keep from hurting her feelings. He begged her not to get something out of all—and she wouldn't let him finish, but cried that he should wait and see it set up.

When he did see it standing in their bedroom, beneath its dainty rose hangings, he exclaimed: "For God's sake keep the door shut when we have company! It makes me feel guilty to look at it."

He demanded how much she had paid for it. She said she hadn't paid for it all—wouldn't for a long time, either. She said if he was taking up the whole living-room with his old

books and things it was certainly her right to furnish the bedroom. Did he want her to sleep on a board?

When all was ready—with linen-closet groaning and china-closet glistening—they invited Tom and Joe and Amy Tarbell to theater and supper afterwards in the new flat. Evelyn had everything sent over from Brooklyn and waiting for them at the apartment. No servants. Everything on the dining-table and a row of bottles under ice in the sink.

If Ondricek had ever had faint misgivings about Evelyn's judgment regarding the furnishing of their home they died now an instant death. If any trace of doubt regarding the wisdom of their venture as a whole still lingered in his system it was wiped out by this ante-nuptial celebration. For nothing of the sort could possibly have survived the radiant triumph of Evelyn on that night, nor the stormy enthusiasm of his friends which grew stormier and more scandalous until Ondricek begged them all for God's sake to go a little easy lest the landlord put them out before they had come in.

In the face of this protest Evelyn shouted that if Mr. Crandall—Tom—Tommy—requested her to do so a single once more she would certainly be obliged to play for him the Liebestraum, because Tommy was her guest, and her dear friend for whom she felt awfully, terribly sorry ever since he had told her that no one loved him. At which Amy gasped: "Traitor!" and drained a glass of French poison to its last fatal drop.

Then it was that Evelyn was elected charter member with full privileges and all exemptions of the firm of Crandall, Tarbell and Ondricek. And while they were installing her with due ceremony Amy Tarbell went snooping around and discovered Evelyn's bed. Then it was all off! Then Evelyn told them how she had had to coax and plead with Paul to allow her just this one single extravagance. And Paul was voted unanimously a stupid, stubborn chuckle-head who was no more entitled to his good fortune than a squid is to earrings.

Then Evelyn told them about Madame Pompadour. Instantly it became her nickname. Amy Tarbell declared with violence that if Joe Tarbell didn't hurry up and make money and buy her a bed like that for New Year's there wouldn't

be any New Year's in their calendar. She'd give him till New Year's. Ondricek tried not to look as idiotic as he felt.

Evelyn, remembering that Brooklyn was a long way from Gramercy Park, gave Paul a signal and Paul insisted on breaking up the party. As they two were taxiing their way over the Brooklyn Bridge this same complaint of distance between New York and Brooklyn broke out in Ondricek. For Ondricek still had his little old bachelor-room in Forty-ninth Street off Broadway. With awareness of distance came appreciation of the absence of it, for at that moment they were very, very close. This led to speculation about time because there were still three interminable weeks between them and heaven and Evelyn was very melancholy about both the distance and the time that theoretically lay between them. Who could tell what all might happen in twenty-one days! Or between Prospect Park and Forty-ninth Street? She hated to think of him plodding wearily this same bumpety-bump pavement back to that cold, dismal little room that had only a bed and a chair in it while she was all comfy and nice in her big warm bed, alone. It didn't seem fair, did it? And anyway she hated to have this wonderful night end.

So it didn't. That is—all nights end, of course, in one sense, at sunrise.

"Perhaps," said Evelyn, struck by a sad thought as they stood together in the darkened entry of her silent house and she fumbled for her key, "this may be the last time you ever see my home."

"Well, I hope not," chuckled Ondricek, stupidly.

Ondricek on his way back to business very early the following morning, figuring up the actual expense and the more intangible profit and loss of the previous night, was in a mood very different from that which had brought him to Brooklyn. He kept telling himself of his immeasurable good fortune by way of combating a depression which he felt to be unpardonable. It wasn't because they had broken their resolution. That was absurd. It wasn't for any other explainable reason.

"Gone!" he groaned. "Lock, stock and barrel!" He didn't specify what.

Evelyn, however, who had no business to go to and was still in the afterglow of her abandon to a passionate happiness, thumbed the pages of her address-book, put a cross in front of the names of those to whom she would send the announcement of her marriage and hummed, as she did so, a nondescript melody which flickered up and down like the flight of a wild canary. The melody she hummed fitted the words of her announcement which kept repeating themselves within her without her being conscious of them: "At home, at home, at home! October first!"

She was going to be at home a long, long time before October!

On Thursday of the last week of June Evelyn stood with Paul Ondricek before the black-marble mantelpiece in the parlor of the old Grainger home and listened to the solemn words which the Reverend Dr. Elisha Beebe was reading out of a little book held very close to his eyes. For the light was poor because of the heavy vines that draped the porch outside and old Doctor Beebe's sight had been faulty even twenty-four years before this when for the first time he had married Evelyn Grainger to a man. The only other persons in the room with them were her father who stood close behind Evelyn and Aunt Pru who sat over by the window watching this little ceremony with a peculiar expression on her face difficult indeed for any one to fathom who was not familiar with sixty years of Grainger family-history.

Many and varied, but merging one with the other, were the pictures flitting through Aunt Pru's mind, all threaded by the speculation as to what her niece was actually thinking and feeling as she stood there swearing to love and cherish this young fellow after having lived half her life with another man and borne him children and been rich and happy and faithful to him for twenty odd years. She, too, had once sworn to love and cherish a man. Nothing in her own experience to teach her how a woman could change her mind so easily. Her brother had tried that experiment. Aunt Pru had watched it work out. She wondered if her brother thought of it now as he stood there beside his daughter. There was some-

thing depressing in this ceremony for Aunt Pru. It had something in it of sham.

Evelyn thought not a single one of the thoughts which Aunt Pru attributed to her. Not a single one. A picture flashed before her of this same room, of herself, standing in almost this very spot, near her father, listening to these same words. And she was a girl of twelve and her sister Edith was marrying Frank Marshall and she was listening for the first time to these words which she had heard so often since. The magic of these words came over her now as then—their mystery and power. The resolve to live those words to their utmost limit of meaning possessed her. Now she knew what it meant to give herself in marriage to a man. Now she could have told Aunt Carrie what these words meant. Aunt Carrie was dead; and much was dead. But this man whose hand she clasped with strong fingers that did not tremble lived. Him she would tell in better ways than by words through all the years that were left to her.

Charles Grainger had that instant in his mind, not reflections on his own experiments in matrimony, but a vision of that day when he returned, once more a free man after four years of war, and stood with the mother of this girl before a tiny crib in the room above them and looked down at a sleeping mite who was now this woman who was her mother and his wife, so striking at this moment was the similarity between them in voice and looks and gesture. So had Jane Sheldon looked into his eyes to tell him what love meant to a woman.

But Ondricek was not concerned with the past. For him these moments blotted out the past. He clasped the hand of this woman who seemed ineffably beautiful to him, looked into those eyes in the clear, gray depths of which he read courage and trust and confidence, pledged his faith, realizing for the first time what pledging faith can mean to a man.

It was only when they were alone together later that afternoon on the train which was carrying them swiftly north to a place she did not know that thoughts of John Ferris came to Evelyn. They were brought by her memory of that other trip

she had taken with a man she had married, that trip which had ended so soon and so pitifully, as it seemed to her now. Involuntarily she clung more tightly to the arm of her husband. What had she known then of life, of love, of anything!

She felt intensely sorry for John Ferris. She had had so little to give him and had thought she had so much. And the little she had had she had refused him! Were other young girls so stupidly selfish in marriage as she had been? Perhaps he was looking down at her now. A passionate plea for his forgiveness formed on her lips. Had he known how to teach her then what it means to a man for a woman to fling to the four winds that stupid false-modesty which had been drilled into her as religion, and to think of passion as a thing of beauty, not of shame, would their life together have been so drab and empty for them both? He could not have taught her then. No man could have taught her then. Only after life and death, and suffering had taught her. Now she knew that a woman's passion is a compound of all these three.

She was grateful to her lover that he did not talk, but let her taste to the full the flavor of her happiness. She was grateful to him, so boundlessly grateful to him! She smiled. She was thinking of the implications behind her father's polite questionings. Her father had so plainly wanted to ask her if she was sure she was not making a mistake!

Her lover-husband! Once before he had taken her away like this out of the world up into these hills. Then, as now, she had not known where they were going. Could that have been only five months ago? She had said five years. Five years! She would so love him, so fill his life and self with her that five years would seem but a foretaste of all the years to come.

Then she had come back to face the torment of those weeks of winter—to make that last horrible blunder. Now she would never come back. She was starting on a journey that would end for her with death. At the end of its first stage was the little home she had made for them with its two windows overlooking Gramercy Park. In three days they would return

to their home together. She prayed that she might be pregnant then.

Trees on a hill at her left cast long shadows toward her. The sun settled lazily down on the rim of the world. In the far distance a faintly purple mass overlain by golden haze from which floated out to her visions that were memories colored by wishes. She began telling Paul of these. This was the delight of their comradeship. She felt so at one with him, so certain of his understanding, that her most intimate thoughts flowed into speech and back again to silence without her knowing where silence ended and speech began.

She described to him the difference between her happiness now and the happiness she had felt when he had taken her on that first voyage of discovery. He smilingly reminded her that she had trespassed on their agreement that for these three days there would be no past for them, only an imagined, endless now. But she was constantly trespassing on that agreement. She explained that "now" included all her past and all her future. He must let her do everything she wished to do and think everything she wished to think and tell him everything she thought because every thought that came to her was beautiful because of him. And that was true. She said that every wish she had had about their wedding-day had come true. She began enumerating all the things she had wished for. Her boy's telegram—she burst into laughter.

She said that on that morning when she had weighed herself on the old scales in her father's bathroom, the thing had gone down at one hundred and forty-two pounds. And that was the mark she had set for herself. So even that had come true! She remembered weighing herself on that same scales twenty-four years ago and then she had weighed just one hundred and seventeen. So she had gained about twenty-four pounds in twenty-four years. One pound a year. That wasn't so much, was it?

9

Three days later Evelyn returned to enter with a husband for the second time a new home and a new period of radical

readjustment. For the second time she put herself to the task of building the setting for a man's fortune. If her problem now was more complicated than before she herself was more capable of solving problems as they presented themselves. Her toy home was a delight to her. She was constantly telling him what she had done, or planned to do, because she wished to show him her happiness and because she was hungry for his praise. She permitted a girl to come in only twice a week to clean thoroughly and cook a dinner. The rest of the work she did herself; did it, Ondricek assured her, to the last, faint penumbra of perfection. Since helping her was, in itself, a privilege, Ondricek who had always been able to fry an egg and scrub a pan after a fashion became expert at making toast, preparing grapefruit, setting a table in conformity with Evelyn's fetish of daintiness—carried now to absurd extremes —at washing fragile china in the precise order of its fragility and leaving a wiped glass with no adhering particle of lint, or suspicion of stain on its shining periphery to offend the critical eye of his directress-in-charge.

They were almost uninterruptedly alone during these first months of marriage. Therefore they could enjoy to the full their new freedom. Jane sailed immediately after commencement for her summer in Europe with her Aunt Edna. Allen went with Gordon Bradley and another chum on his fishing-trip to the Maine woods. On the night before Jane sailed Evelyn had Jane and Edna at dinner with her and Paul; not in their apartment; on the Waldorf roof.

When Evelyn and Ondricek, late that evening, entered their little apartment together she impulsively threw her arms about him.

"Oh, I'm glad to be here—alone again—with you! You were such a dear!"

Their new freedom to enjoy each other. This it was that tempered the heat of that summer in town; that caused the days and nights to slip past with the silence and color of sunrise and sunset. Now, in very truth, was she his garden of delight, surrounded by a wall. The stones of this wall were still intact, the cement untried by age and weather.

The concessions Ondricek made to life as he found it were conscious concessions made willingly for the sake of a greater good. The concessions Evelyn made were an integral part of her new joy-of-living, were therefore effortless, almost unconscious, but none the less significant. She, no less than he, was aware of deep-lying differences in them. But all such differences were fused now in the heat of their first love. She poured out her strength and herself for him, feeling it not a draft on resources, but an inflowing of new experience, new life. They went on night-rambles together, on out-of-town excursions, on merry parties with Crandall or the Tarbells. The Andersons stopped over night in New York and Evelyn entertained them with an impromptu dinner and theater party.

She used all her cleverness concealing deficits. She made fifty dollars a week cover an amazing amount of legitimate expense—and illegitimate as well (which was, by agreement, her own province). From the first day of the new régime she was constantly and incorrigibly breaking their agreement regarding expense. She was sly about it. He bought her a "family-budget" book and started her off with the first entries. From that time on only God and herself knew what was left out and put in. From time to time Paul puzzled over the "Sundries, gifts, and amusements" column and corrected additions in all the others. She was inconceivably careless with figures. She never kept her bank-balance in her check-book. She never added up what she drew. They were always small checks. She knew she was not beginning to spend her income. He never asked her what it was.

In the fall, when she answered Allen's questions about her affairs, she concealed from her son how little it was costing her to live just as she concealed from her husband how much.

She was intensely ambitious for Paul's success. This fact about which Paul joked with Evelyn during the first months of their marriage was evidence of a change coming rapidly over Evelyn the nature of which Paul began to appreciate at first very indistinctly. Later its effect on them both was far-reaching indeed.

This change was a curious kind of metempsychosis by which

Evelyn's former ambition to do things on her own account was, as it were, put at Paul's disposal for his benefit. She no longer practiced daily at her piano. Paul questioned her diplomatically. Her stout defense convinced him of the rightness of his suspicion. Evelyn's interest in her music was as nothing compared to what she felt to be her duties as housekeeper—nor any other interest not directly concerned with him. He was her ambition. Never had she exerted one-half the energy and will to accomplish things on her own account that she now evidenced in her eagerness for Paul's success.

Evelyn could not explain this transference except to say that she was content to shine in her husband's glory. At first this statement amused Paul. There came moments when he asked himself if she was too content to shine in reflected glory—such as it was; when he felt behind her eagerness to serve a pressure, indistinct, but there; when the thought came faintly that in her apparently complete self-subordination to him she was, in fact, dominating his whole life.

She gave Allen a garbled account of contracts which Paul's firm had undertaken and exaggerated the amount of work they had in hand. She was forever questioning Paul about this. She had a confused picture in her mind of what he did from week to week and of the progress of different jobs. The Tarbells told each other that she was some little pusher! Amy Tarbell asked Joe why he didn't get some of Mrs. Ferris'—or Mrs. Ondricek's—money into the business. Had he ever talked frankly to Ondricek? Well, why didn't he?

This idea had occurred to Evelyn herself without any suggestion. It came to her one evening when Allen was advising her to sell the Brooklyn house. He was saying that there was too much money lying there idle. There was no sense storing furniture and trying to lease the house. It wouldn't net two per cent of its value. Evelyn told Allen she would have to think it over.

She didn't have to think. She had only to find out what Paul thought. She found it out before she had even had a chance to tell him what her idea was. She had merely asked him casually if it could be of any advantage to the firm and

to himself if he would put capital into the business as Joe Tarbell had done. Paul had looked at her for a moment. For the first time she saw a disagreeable expression come over his face.

"No!" he said shortly. "It would not!"

That was all. He had never used that tone to her. She flushed.

"I—I was only thinking—"

"Don't!" He laughed. She was hurt. She hadn't said a word about the Brooklyn house. "My value to Crandall and Tarbell has nothing whatever to do with capital. That's Tarbell's business—strictly."

There was no use telling him about her plan of selling her house.

Then a letter from Jane put everything else temporarily into the background. Jane had been back only two weeks from Europe. Evelyn had spent the better part of two days with her in town. At that time Jane had said nothing about marriage. Consequently Jane's calm announcement, in her first letter to her mother from college, that she had decided to marry Gordon Bradley in January stunned Evelyn. She telephoned Allen. Did he know anything of this? No. It was a complete surprise to him. Bradley was in Chicago. Allen thought Jane a fool to drop out of college—what was her hurry?

Evelyn wrote Jane the longest letter she had ever written her, counseling her darling girl from the depths of her own experience, advising Jane to postpone her decision until they two could talk the whole thing over together. Jane replied that she had already made her decision. Gordon was a splendid fellow, devotion itself. She would never have anything to worry about. Her mother had done as she wished about marrying. Why shouldn't she? Naturally she didn't know much about marriage. She would learn soon enough—like everybody else. She was going to quit college at Thanksgiving and come to New York to live with her Aunt Edna at the Plaza until her marriage.

Late in January, before the altar of the leading Baptist

church of Flatbush—for old man Bradley was a hard-shelled Baptist of the ante-oil days of western Pennsylvania—Miss Jane Ferris was united in wedlock to Mr. Gordon Bradley in a double-column, illustrated, Brooklyn Eagle society page flurry and left immediately after a sumptuous wedding-breakfast in the exquisitely decorated banquet hall of the Hotel Bossert for an indefinite sojourn in parts relatively south and sunnier.

Evelyn's sigh as she and Ondricek taxied back to Gramercy Park was partly one of relief. She had been in a whirl for the past several weeks. She was sad. She had cried a bit. Her little girl was no longer her little girl. But that had been true for some time. The circumstances of this marriage were such as to make it but distantly related to her own experience. Jane knew too much, was too sure of herself. Evelyn's sadness was not profound. It was colored by the fact that she and her husband were brought closer than ever by this loss of her daughter by marriage.

They were once more alone—with a difference. Paul knew that they could never be alone in the sense that they had been alone during the previous summer. It was stupid to expect to be. Edna still lived on at the Plaza. Ondricek had become interested in the mathematics of bridge. Evelyn, who was profoundly impressed by Paul's explanations of the laws of chance, vaguely wondered why he kept making so many stupid leads. It seemed so difficult for him to get the idea of a partner. She kept telling people who asked about it that with a little more practice her husband would surely become a brilliant player because of his keenly analytical mind. He kept excusing blunders by laying claim to a rotten memory.

"Conventional leads!" he would snort when they were alone—as if they were a personal affront.

When Jane and her husband returned from their wedding-trip and settled in their apartment on Brooklyn Heights, Evelyn went frequently to call, to help Jane in her household problems. Little by little she was drawn back into social relations with her old and, more particularly, with Jane's Brooklyn friends. Her little misunderstandings with Jane were gradually ironed out, or covered up carefully and well. Jane be-

came able to introduce her mother, or to speak of her to strangers as Mrs. Ondricek without any noticeable strain on her throat-muscles. Then, with the onset of April, Jane had a first frightened talk with her mother about an unmistakable indication of increase in family and trouble as a whole, and they were back on familiar ground. Here the question of husbands did not enter. Evelyn was intensely concerned with the thought of this grandchild that was coming to her with all its many and dubious implications. Paul had to assure her again and again, not knowing what underlay her questions, that their life together seemed to him sweet and wholesome and satisfying beyond all his expectations.

Ondricek had become thoroughly settled in his new job. The Detroit cathedral-proposition had died a natural death. Only Evelyn still talked about it occasionally. But he had brought in two good contract-jobs. He would draw this year, in salary and commissions, over five thousand dollars. He and Evelyn took a month's holiday, part of the time at Stamford, part at Nantucket where they loafed together in the sun.

Allen spent a few days with them at Nantucket while the football squad was gathering for its pre-season practice. One afternoon he went over his plans for work after graduation the following spring. He talked for two or three hours with Paul of the ideas that were forming in his head for the expansion of the retail shoe-business. While they talked Evelyn watched them fondly, happily, feeling that things were all working out as they should. And as she listened a new idea popped into her head. She sprang it on them instantly.

Jane's baby was coming in January. Jane and Gordon were planning to move in October. Why not into the Brooklyn house? She would give Jane the Brooklyn house as a Christmas present—that is Jane's half of it—if Allen could fix it up some way with Gordon about the other half—Allen's half. Wouldn't old Mr. Bradley buy it for Gordon? For a while Paul listened to a heated argument with something pleasanter than amusement. He loved Evelyn for precisely this combination of impetuosity and canniness. Then he left them to

try for a few porgies at the end of the pier. So he did not hear the conclusion of the argument.

In October Evelyn deeded over her house and contents—with certain reservations—to Allen and Jane. In November Allen came one evening in great glee to dine with his mother and stepfather and handed to Evelyn a certified check for eighty-five thousand dollars endorsed by him to Evelyn Ondricek.

"It's the best I could do," he said, "with the old tight-wad."

Evelyn handed it to Paul.

"There! Look at it!"

Then he read the endorsement. Then he stared at Allen. Then it began to dawn on him as to what sort of a fellow Allen really was. Then Evelyn had a double triumph for she had known all along what Allen was going to do. She almost burst right out with the sequel of all this. But she didn't. That wasn't the way to put things before Paul. First she would have a talk with Tom Crandall and Joe Tarbell when Paul wasn't there to make a little feeling-out conversation impossible. Why shouldn't he be drawing two hundred a week like Joe Tarbell instead of three hundred a month? He had three times as much brains as Joe Tarbell and Tom Crandall put together.

Early in December Mr. and Mrs. Bradley moved into their new home on Prospect Park West. Shortly before Christmas Mr. and Mrs. Ondricek were entertained there at a family dinner. The head of the present dynasty of Bradleys was at the head of the table. It seemed as if he had always sat there. Paul had Mrs. Bradley as table-partner. Mrs. Bradley understood from her daughter-in-law that Mr. Ondricek's family were interested in coal-mines. Now, exactly what was the matter with those ruffians out there in Pennsylvania who flatly refused to work so poor people in Brooklyn had to freeze to death?

Gordon Bradley took his mother and father and mother-in-law and stepfather-in-law around the house and showed them a few of the changes he was going to make. Paul kept trying to keep his thoughts from wandering back to now dis-

tant hours that had made these rooms sacred to him. Just what kind of an architect had Mr. Ferris had, anyway, when he laid out this place? That nursery, for example! So darn impractical! But Gordon would worry along till the spring—till after Jane had had her little tea-party.

Mr. Bradley senior told Ondricek confidentially on the way downstairs—the others were still talking alterations up in Evelyn's former bedroom—that if Mrs. Ferris—that is, Mrs. Ondricek—really needed any of this stuff around the house, why, Paul could forget the terms of the contract. Come right in and pick it out. This was a family matter!

When Ondricek was once more out in the air, walking along the park-wall a little down the street from this house which he had mentally sworn never again to enter unless they dragged him there in a patrol-wagon or a hearse, he startled Evelyn by suddenly walking on his toes, working his arms up and down, contorting his face in a way that suggested preparations for a cataleptic fit. Then the attack passed off in an escape of language.

Evelyn would have been only too willing to agree with Paul if he had made it consistent with decency. This kind of talk in the mouth of her husband gave her a distinctly disagreeable shock. Paul had a vulgar streak in him. It was undeniable. It was not the first time in her life that Evelyn had heard something similar. But when John had talked like this there had been some excuse for it. She said it was perfectly unnecessary for Paul to state his opinion of his new relatives. He had made it perfectly obvious for the last two hours.

Never had a grandmother felt at once more satisfaction and less comfort, more pride and less reconciliation than did Evelyn at the successful advent of her first grandchild, Stuart Ferris Bradley. When—or if—now her and Paul's baby should come she would have a daughter, or a son, younger than her grandchild. It was an odd sort of arrangement. Not so uncommon. The thought gave her peculiar pleasure, a sense of energy, of strength. She had been eager from the day

of her marriage with Paul for a child. Now she was more than eager.

As if to atone for past weeks of neglect which was in fact but imagined she identified herself more completely than ever with Paul's every free hour, his every plan for work, or play. More than ever did he realize the intimacy of their comradeship.

It was early in the spring that Paul had the thing squarely before him. Evelyn had found her opportunity for a talk alone with Crandall and Tarbell. She had taken them into her confidence. Then, when she was alone, she had begun to feel panicky and consulted Mr. Johnson. What did he think about investing money in the building-business? And about Crandall and Tarbell? Mr. Johnson said he would investigate. A week later he reported that it was a risky business. He would advise—and Evelyn interrupted to say that she didn't need any advice. She had already made up her mind.

For she had made an appointment to lunch with Joe the following day while Tom and Paul were out on a job. After a lot of preliminaries Joe told Evelyn that if Paul—or she, or both of them—put in a hundred thousand dollars for working-capital they would reorganize, incorporate, and Paul—or she, or both of them—would have a one-third interest in a greatly enlarged business. And why would it cost Paul a hundred thousand dollars for one-third of the business when it had only cost Joe fifty thousand dollars for one-half? This Joe tried to make clear to her. His figures didn't change the facts. She said she didn't have a hundred thousand dollars.

"You can smile all you want to; you might as well know the truth. I will pay eighty-five thousand dollars for a one-third interest. Only it has to be done quickly, because I want to give it to Paul on his birthday. And of course it has to be protected and all that because I know perfectly well that it's a very risky business."

Then Joe said that he was awfully sorry, but they had decided on a hundred thousand. Then Evelyn said she was awfully sorry because she had decided on eighty-five.

In this debate which involved Ondricek's worth to the firm

Joe Tarbell, to whom eighty-five thousand dollars meant vastly more than it did to Evelyn, was no match for her. Figures were all very nice, she exclaimed, but suppose Paul should leave? Did Joe think for a minute that his old third-interest would be worth very much? He ought to think of that! It was worth a good many times more than fifteen thousand dollars to have her husband with them. She was ready to give them eighty-five thousand dollars cash. She could do it tomorrow. But it had to be precisely eighty-five thousand dollars and not one cent more.

Joe finally asked when Paul's birthday happened along. Then she told him that all she had said meant exactly nothing at all unless Paul wished her to do all this. So they debated how they had best take it up with Paul. Joe said that long ago he'd thought of making Paul precisely this proposition. Only the time had never been ripe.

In the course of the next two weeks Paul capitulated to common-sense, having lost his first sharply-felt unwillingness by reasoning with himself and talking to all of them. He accepted Evelyn's gift to him as it had been given—on the basis of their mutual interest—knowing that he could not refuse it without hurting her inexcusably and seeming to his partners an idiot. He rightly appraised the impulsive generosity which underlay Evelyn's triumphant self-satisfaction at the way she had solved the problem of her Brooklyn home. He wrote a long, difficult letter acknowledging his obligation to Allen for the way he had acted throughout.

And all the while he felt the pressure of his gratitude to Evelyn—not for the use of her money, but for the love that prompted her—as a well-nigh unexplainable sense of oppression.

10

Formulated purposes and plans are clumsy male devices. In woman's far more sensitive and complicated organism the subconscious lies nearer the surface and guides far more actively and boldly. In this fact roots her so-called intuitive instinct—her own ignorance of the reason for her acts, or be-

liefs. Woman being more honest than man is far less able to explain herself. She arrives at perfectly correct conclusions from entirely false premises since the reasons she gives in all sincerity are not, in fact, the reasons that have controlled her.

Evelyn had made this gift quite spontaneously. She would have resented any inference that the purpose behind her act was one which in fact controlled everything she did at the time; namely, to make it impossible for Ondricek to live without her. She had no more need to put this purpose into precise terms than one needs to bear clearly in mind the fact that the earth is spinning. It was equally basic. She put money into Ondricek's business because she wished him to be happy because he was successful because she loved him because he loved her because she was what she was because he made her so because he was happy because she put money into his business. She didn't have to reason her way around this circle.

Coincident with her investment of money in the business her interest in it became much more intelligent. She, to whom blue-prints and elevations had once had the same significance as the zodiac to an Eskimo, became enthusiastic over designs for skyscrapers and Ondricek's estimates of concrete construction-costs. She read, now, the real-estate section of the Sunday Times instead of the society page of the Brooklyn Eagle. Always she searched for the name of Crandall, Tarbell and Ondricek, or jobs with which they were identified. She bought a huge scrapbook and cut out such notices, or cuts of buildings and pasted them into it with dates written underneath.

In June Allen graduated from Yale. Ondricek and Evelyn spent four days at New Haven during the attendant festivities as guests of the Andersons. Once when they were alone in their room after a faculty-luncheon she asked Paul if he felt, now, that he would have been happier had he kept his position here. In that case she could have gone to lectures and taken courses of study—she would like to show some of these professors' wives how to wear a hat or dress! But it was better as it was, wasn't it? He was doing so wonderfully well! He declared that things were very much better as they were. Very much. It was too easy to get into a rut up here

out of the traffic. Look at the Andersons, for example. It seemed impossible to Paul that it was but two years since he had left all this behind him. It seemed ten. He could never go back.

Yet when he thought over these two years in terms of actual accomplishment he realized that he had precious little cause for self-congratulation. The one real thing he had done—the cathedral design—had come to nothing. The church-committee had quarreled and given up all idea of building for the present. All that Paul had received for his work was one or two newspaper-notices which Evelyn had pasted into her book. But the firm of Crandall, Tarbell and Ondricek were about to undertake three new contracts which would keep them busy for some time to come. They were bidding on others. He drew four times as much salary as he had two years before—and spent four times as much. His clothes had become more expensive—not better. The same was true of his habits. He worked harder—that is, more hours a day. He also had more pleasures—and less content. But this was a sign of health. Or—was it? The one thing which made his present completely different from his past was —Evelyn. She summed up the changes. She was his accomplishment.

Curious, he reflected, how swiftly one can become enmeshed in a tangle of circumstances which at first sight seems wholly incidental so that it becomes impossible to say where it ends and you begin. Such a relation as theirs was not a physical one between two entities. It resembled, rather, a chemical compound. Chemical compounds range from basalt to nitroglycerine; are stable, or unstable, depending a little upon circumstances, and very much upon constituents.

Ondricek and Evelyn were happy in their life together. Their flame of passion steadied, spread and deepened into a serviceable, not a destructive form of energy. He did not worry her now with boring questions into her past. She had told him all there was to tell. She had successfully bridged that gulf which he had once felt to be so deep and wide. Insensibly they were acquiring similarity of tastes, of habit

and opinion. She, too, was becoming more practical, losing in fastidiousness and gaining in insight. She dressed with greater care than ever before, but also with greater simplicity. She cared for her body more jealously than ever, but abandoned a lot of previous notions about sickness and health.

In general things were working out nicely. Shortly after the turn of the year Allen went vigorously at his scheme of expanding the chain-store business throughout all of the eastern cities. As new leases were closed, Crandall, Tarbell and Ondricek remodeled the leased buildings into shoe-stores on a flat contract basis. It fascinated Evelyn to hear of one store after another starting up, here, there, in town and out. In this work her husband and her son were dependent on each other. She never compared the relative importance of each in the operation. It never occurred to her that this dependence on Allen—slight as it was—which delighted her could annoy Paul.

He was hypersensitive. He knew it. He called himself foolish. It didn't change the facts. He had sworn that he would never become tangled up with her family and her money. He was very thoroughly tangled up with both. As a result he was prospering.

In May of nineteen-twelve Allen married Beatrice Holden. Another top-of-column Brooklyn Eagle event. This time illustrated. This time a solemner affair all around since Beatrice was high Episcopalian which is one step above a low Episcopalian which is a couple of flights over a Presbyterian, and practically out of sight from a Baptist. Not much of a flurry this time for Evelyn. The Holdens did the flurrying. Evelyn could only look on and explain to Allen the things he must do and the things he must not do in public. She also tried, without talking too baldly, to impress upon him the significance of unselfishness, of self-control in marriage with a sweet girl like Beatrice Holden who knew nothing of life and had only him to teach her.

When she told Paul of her intimate talk with Allen he smiled in that sarcastic way which she said hurt her, but which, in fact, she had learned to dislike. He was of the opinion

that Betty Holden didn't need as much teaching as Evelyn thought she did. He'd watched her a few times. Girls nowadays, said he, take them by and large, were not quite at the same stage of unwisdom as Evelyn had been when she had first married.

Evelyn said that if he was so bored by her son's marriage to Betty Holden and preferred to have nothing to do with it she would certainly not ask him to put himself to any inconvenience about it. He asked her why the devil she was twisting what he had said around into something that had never been in his mind at all. She said she knew perfectly well what was in his mind. Well, what? Oh, never mind.

So Ondricek went to the wedding and behaved irreproachably. After the wedding-breakfast he took Evelyn in a hired car to a restaurant on the Jamaica turnpike where he and Evelyn had eaten together on that first day he had ever been in Brooklyn with her. And they, having started the day, as it were, with champagne, finished it with yellow chartreuse. When the waiter poured it into their glasses it made that same goggle-goggle noise as it had done when they had drunk this same nectar from the bottle on that never-to-be-forgotten voyage of discovery up into the Connecticut hills. And later Paul declared her sweeter and more adorable than any bride in all the world. And she said that if he would give her champagne a little oftener, why, she wouldn't worry so much about how old she was getting to be.

She did worry. On the night of her forty-sixth birthday she lay awake, restless because all the years that lay behind her seemed to be pressing against her, hurrying her on against her will to—to what? Oh God, could she never sit down, content, sure of what she held and confident in her strength to hold it?

They had had a merry party with the Tarbells and Tom Crandall. The firm had given her a beautiful tea-set. Ondricek had told her that never in her life had she looked more beautiful than on that night at dinner. The perfume of the flowers he had given her still lingered in their room. He had fallen asleep beside her after a last good-night kiss—happy,

if she knew anything of him, or of man's happiness. She had heard his slow, quiet breathing. She was tired, physically and mentally. What was merely a natural reaction from the long evening's excitement and stimulation she felt as the exhaustion of age. Once, when she had had so little in her life to make her happy she had had endless courage to face the future. Now that she had so much, she had this unreasonable uneasiness. It was because having all this after forty years of waiting she knew what it was worth to her. She turned her head toward her sleeping husband and thought of how empty her life would be if the love and the strength of this man were suddenly taken from her. In that moment Evelyn for the first time realized how completely dependent she had become on another for everything that made life seem worth living.

On the following day she called at the office of Doctor Ogilvie. That night she talked with Paul about the fact of her not having children. Ought she not to consult a physician? Perhaps there was something wrong with her.

"Don't be foolish, dear!"

"Perhaps if I had some kind of an operation. Perhaps—"

"Oh hell! I don't—I mean— Listen, Eve. When I married you I married you for the sake of living with you, of having in my life the happiness which you have given me and which you give me now, because I loved you for the woman you are. I didn't marry you in order to have a baby by you. Now, that's honest—regardless of the circumstances of our marriage. All this talk about babies you have always started. I don't for a moment deny that I would love to have a child by you. If it doesn't come—then it doesn't come. I certainly am extremely averse to starting operations and the devil knows what—I hate the thought of it. Perhaps that's silly. There's something extremely—please don't let's talk about it any more. You're imagining a lot of things which simply do not exist—about me, about yourself. Let's forget it, will you?"

She didn't. Nor was all her talk based on imagination. Doctor Ogilvie had given a very probable reason for her

apparent sterility. He said it was an everyday matter. She must try one thing. If that didn't work, then another—as if she were a carburetor. His matter-of-factness had cheered her. When she had told him her real age he had looked at her in amazement. He said: Impossible! Then he looked up her card in his file. Then she confessed to having lied to him that other time.

So she had gone home all pepped up and quite ready to go the following day and have her old womb sewed back into place—if that would really make any difference. And now Paul wouldn't let her. Well, it was for him to say.

For a time she accepted her husband's fatalistic attitude as common-sense and ceased to worry about the matter.

One of Paul's jobs had been the remodeling of an apartment-house across the square from where they lived. In this new house he leased a six-room apartment for five years. Late in the fall they moved into their new home. The extra room permitted the maid on whom Paul had been insisting. He said it was silly for her to spend her time at housework now that they could afford a servant. She could use her time to better advantage. It was true—and yet— So once more Evelyn was free to go and come pretty much as she pleased. She went very little. An occasional bridge at the Brooklyn Woman's club of which Betty and Jane were members. She met women with whom she had been more or less intimate in the past. She felt as though she had traveled a vast distance since then. She agreed with Paul that living in Brooklyn must in itself have a deadly effect on a woman. The women she met at the Chatham, or Plaza, weren't growing old—at least, not so obviously.

It was her gray hair. If it weren't for her hair no one would believe her a day over—well, say, forty. She talked with Louis in Simonson's about it. She tried on transformations of various shades, found it extraordinarily difficult to find one that matched her brows. Louis raved over those brows, raved over her hair. He clasped his hands together. Oh, let him but create for madame a coiffeur!

When she felt out Paul on the subject—skillfully, casu-

ally—she ended by weeping. What had started as a simple question on her part and a startled look on his led from one thing to another until the whole question of their marriage had been dragged up again, and why and wherefore and a lot of things that had no relation to a woman's passing fancy for one of Louis's transformations. Was anything more normal than that a woman should want herself to look well?

Not everybody thought about gray hair the way Paul did. Do what you would it was always there. She did not think of herself, now, as Madame Pompadour.

A month after this in the lobby of the Woman's Club she met Doctor Henderson for the first time in four years. The doctor had called for his wife. Mrs. Henderson had already left. Evelyn and Jane were also about to leave. Evelyn tried, without betraying her nervousness, or being rude, to limit Doctor Henderson to a simple greeting and good-by. She said she was overdue at home.

Dr. Henderson said that he was that minute on his way to New York. He had only stopped to tell his wife. He would take Evelyn home. She declined. The subway was quicker. She had gotten so used to the subway that—Jane interrupted her. When? It was perfectly silly! So to prevent Jane from speculating unnecessarily she accepted the doctor's invitation. She did so with a swift glance which told him what she felt it necessary for him to understand.

She sat in the doctor's little closed Buick. He saw her nervousness. He grinned. He began asking her questions. Gradually a feeling of relief displaced her uneasiness. She was telling her old lover of how completely her love for Paul had changed her life.

Suddenly she was telling him of her longing for a baby, of her hopes and fears, of her talks with Doctor Ogilvie, of her recent warnings that her time was short. Dr. Henderson did not ask her why she had not come to him. But it hurt him. So completely had she thrown him out of her life.

He explained to her why it was wrong on all counts for her to worry about this. There was a mysterious chemistry involved. But she had had her children! To bear a child

at her age would be—well— Did she remember her last childbirth? What had she at, at—what?—forty-six—to do with all the labor and mess and slavery of nursing babies? Forget it! Enjoy life with her husband. If she had to play with babies go play with her grandchildren. He laughed.

Then he saw that his levity was ill-timed. Very well. If she persisted in her wish he would send her to a friend of his. If any one in New York was capable of handling her case it was this friend. Would she let him talk with Ondricek?

"No!"

"Have you ever told him about—us?"

She nodded her head. "Yes."

"Everything?"

"Yes."

"Why? Do you think it was necessary?"

"Yes. I think it was."

The doctor smiled, then frowned. For a moment they were silent.

"When you tell him," said he, "about your ride home with me, tell him also that I am just as much in love with you to-day as I ever was. More."

She did not answer him immediately.

"I don't think it would worry him—in the slightest. It isn't the truth. You know that quite as well as I."

Later, as she was getting out of his car in front of her house he said soberly:

"It is the truth, Evelyn."

"What?" she asked, for they had just been talking about the doctor's oldest boy's approaching marriage.

"What I told you to tell your husband."

She thought for a moment, then smiled back merrily at him.

"Well, don't let it interfere with your practice."

She told Paul of her meeting with Doctor Henderson, of her ride over from Brooklyn with him. He hesitated for a fraction of a second.

"Yes?"

Then she put her arms about him and asked him if he had the slightest objection. He said:

"I have not the slightest objection."

Which is what she wanted him to say. So she kissed him—and felt unaccountably tragic. Nor did he ask her what they had talked about. So she told him anyway—except for the one thing. Paul said that Henderson had talked horse-sense as far as her fretting about a baby was concerned. Then he asked for permission to look over the evening paper. It had an article in it about a proposed change in the zoning regulations.

Evelyn did not ask Doctor Henderson for his friend's address in New York.

During the following fall, within the space of two months, Jane's second baby, Margaret, registered her first howl of protest to the world, and Allen Grainger Ferris, second, bore witness to Betty's successful effort to make Evelyn a grandmother in all earnest. By this time Evelyn's slight functional irregularity was no longer the cause of false hopes and useless alarm. At certain times, when she felt downright ill and needed perfect quiet and rest her nervousness was aggravated by Paul's inconsiderateness. She thought she could see the effort it cost him to make allowances for her. She could feel it, she told him. He was unfair. If he knew what she suffered he could not be so impatient— But he wasn't impatient! he insisted. Could she help it? Well, who said she could help it? He certainly was trying every way a man— And Doctor Ogilvie said this might last two or three years! Oh God, by that time she'd be dead!

The fact is, she did not suffer physically except to a negligible extent. Her suffering was of a different order.

In June of nineteen-fourteen her father's sudden illness brought her out to Stamford to help poor Aunt Pru over the crisis and to see that her father was properly cared for. Paul came out over week-ends. His firm was busy with half a dozen jobs and Paul usually brought with him a bagful of work and worry. Scarcely had her father struggled back to a precarious foothold on life than a world-sickness broke out over on the Belgian border that was to involve them all in its miasma.

During that August which Evelyn spent for the most part at her father's bedside it all seemed very far away and only vaguely horrible. She felt the faint, far pulse of a world-convulsion chiefly through the gloomy preoccupation of her husband whose business was being thrown by it into a critical confusion. She never mentioned the outbreak of war to her father. He was too ill for useless worry.

Three days before Evelyn's forty-eighth birthday she wired Edith to come on at once. Thirty hours later the old Civil War veteran was mustered out of service for good and all without knowing that young men were rushing by the million into an immeasurably greater and bitterer conflict with precisely the same fanatical conviction of the rightness of their rage as he had glowed in himself fifty-odd years before.

II

The afternoon of her forty-eighth birthday Evelyn spent with Paul out on Shippan Point within sight of the hotel where she had lived during the first summer of their love. They had buried her father on the previous day. The yew-tree which stood sentinel by the family plot behind the old Presbyterian Church on Main Street bent down now and whispered to the little marble bench that they would soon see standing there the last monument but one on which either the name of Grainger or of Sheldon would appear except by courtesy. Edith had left that morning to return to Chicago and her family. Howard's wife was putting the house to rights preparatory to closing it up—presumably forever as far as the Grainger family was concerned.

For Aunt Pru had declared to them all on the previous evening that she would carry out immediately her long matured resolve to spend the rest of her days, in the event she outlived her brother, in the old ladies' home on the north-country road. She had turned a resolutely deaf ear to all their protests. She was eighty-nine years old. Old enough to rest, said she. She wouldn't have any stranger puttering around her. Yes, yes. They could talk all they liked. She thanked

them. But she wanted quiet—and peace. Two of her old friends were already there.

Six years since Evelyn and Paul had sat together on this same bench and he had read to her the Song of Solomon. The five years she had set as the term of their marriage were past and gone. They spoke neither of the Song of Solomon nor of their half-joking, half-serious bargain. She felt sadness on this afternoon on many counts. But she felt also courage and strength. For he was close beside her. The first shock of war had come and passed. A tenseness was spreading through everything—through Ondricek as well. They talked of the confused factors of life surrounding and affecting them. They promised each other that come what might they would make their next five years together richer, fuller for them both than these years which had so incredibly slipped past them.

The war brought Evelyn face to face with strange and confusing problems not only concerning history and geography. Not only did the Carpathians which had previously been for her mountains in the moon, suddenly take shape on her dining-room table—for again in her house pins were being stuck into a war-map; not only did a tangle of races and tongues that had meant as little to her as an unheard humming over an unseen swamp begin to affect her daily comings and goings, confuse her own speech and disturb the intimate relations of her personal life. At meetings of the Brooklyn branch of the Red Cross and at bridge teas in the Woman's Club Evelyn gave garbled versions of a few of Paul's opinions regarding politics and current prejudices. She found herself involved in a series of arguments which grew hotter and hotter until they verged on personal affronts. People who barely knew her asked her pointblank what the name Ondricek stood for.

Her tiffs with bridge-partners would never have sufficed in themselves to make Evelyn unhappy. There were too many and too violent disagreements flying about in the air. But her arguments with Jane and Betty affected her profoundly. She saw bitter personal antipathy breaking out in the guise of differences in political opinion. For the first time

she was made to feel what her own family and relatives by marriage really thought of her Czech husband. At first it only distressed her. As time passed and the pressure on each individual grew greater she became more and more confused by irreconcilable forces pulling her in opposite directions.

The first effect of all this was to throw her and Paul into closer intimacy than ever. At first the influence of his opinions was strong upon her and she was able to reconcile discrepancies between his views and those of all the others with whom she was in close contact. When Paul came home at night tired and worried from the day's strain she played for him after dinner, or insisted on his taking her out to a concert, or play. Then came the four-minute men during the intermissions with their frenetic appeals to patriotism, self-sacrifice, blind prejudice, blood-lust and violence rampant. And Evelyn's subsequent scenes with Paul put too high a price on these evenings of presumable diversion. Allen had abandoned any further expansion of his chain-store operations. He was accumulating leather and up to his ears in negotiations for French and English government-contracts.

In the early spring Edith and Gloria came on from Chicago. Evelyn learned of Frank's intention to build a new home out on Lake Shore Drive. She told Paul of the opportunity ahead of him. Frank could spend millions on a home if he wanted to. He was making money hand over fist from the Allies. They would all have lunch together to-morrow. She would start things; but Paul must follow them up.

A few days later he told Evelyn that he had had lunch with Gloria. He said he honestly began to believe there might be something in the thing. Gloria had gone into it very seriously. Gloria! What did Gloria have to do with it? It was Edith to whom she should talk! Gloria seemed to have very much to do with it. She had shown him a letter from her father telling her to invite Ondricek on to Chicago so that they could all talk it over together. Apparently Edith had never even mentioned the matter to her husband. Evelyn frowned.

"I'll speak to Edith!"

"What about? Why should you?"

"Was Gloria very—dashing—as usual?"

"Why, yes. About as usual. But the girl has ideas. She surprised me. It's the first time I ever heard her talk sense."

"What did you talk about—I mean, beside the house?"

"Nothing. Nothing in particular. Why?"

Evelyn said that if they went to Chicago—that is, assuming that he wanted her to go with him—it would give them the opportunity they had talked of so often to visit his home in Southern Illinois. Paul said, true enough. It would do just that—that is, if he could arrange to stay away so long.

A month later they were in Chicago as guests of the Marshalls and Paul was discussing with the president of one of our larger national banking-institutions the construction of a home suitable to existing circumstances. He found that Mr. Marshall was being driven on by his family. He kept growling angrily that it was a ridiculous time to start any such building as they were talking about. But for years he had been putting them off on one excuse after another. Now the known fact of his recent enormous profits left no refuge for him in the question of expense. Better put it into a home than pay it out in surtaxes. At the end of the second week the firm of Crandall, Tarbell and Ondricek had entered into a definite contract with Frank J. Marshall. Paul wired his partners an idea of the plum he had picked for them.

It was the first time since girlhood that Evelyn had lived intimately with her sister. Herbert was now president of a trust-company subsidiary to his father's. He, personally, was subsidiary to his father's politics, dimensions and prosperity.

He lived four blocks down the avenue. He had four children and an anomalous wife who suffered from poor circulation. They were all frequently in Edith's home for dinner, bridge and the like. Gloria's two children were also much in evidence in spite of the efforts of Gloria's two maids. Gloria herself saw her children now and then. Edith had given up all pretense of keeping tabs on Gloria. It required too much effort. It was enough that the poor child, after all she had gone through with that Wisconsin lumberman, was enjoying herself. She was.

Paul was also enjoying himself. He had been promptly installed, being useful, as family favorite. The fact that Paul pretended stupidly to be unconscious of Gloria's game did not for a moment blind Evelyn. If there was no other man in sight Gloria would ogle the moon.

But once on the train from Chicago to Marksville Evelyn was very happy. She was happy because Paul had closed this whopping contract which would bring him a lot of publicity, because Chicago was behind them and she again alone with her husband, because she was going with him to visit his parents in his old boyhood home.

Evelyn had become fond of Paul's mother, in a way, at a distance. She had seen photographs of the family in the stiff, awkward poses of a countryman's solemnest moment. She had written two or three times to Mrs. Ondricek or to Milena, the sister. Paul had described his old home to her. She had a curiously distorted picture in her mind of the family, the house, the great culm-pile near-by, the mine, the village—everything. It was all totally unrelated to anything in her personal experience. As they approached the railroad station nearest Marksville which lay off the main line on a spur over which only coal was carried and Paul began to point out familiar landmarks she shared his increasing eagerness.

They sped past the first coal-mine at which Evelyn had ever really looked—a huge, black hill thrown up, fragment by fragment, by the labor of human ants. Paul explained that this was a very large corporation-mine. He described the process of mining soft coal. They pulled into their destination. Paul's younger brother, Joe, black-haired, powerful, rattled all Paul's teeth in greeting. He was the brother who ran the mine. He grinned down at Evelyn, shouted:

"Hello, Evelyn! By jingo, I didn't really believe you'd ever come to this god-forsaken hole. I'm sure glad to see you!"

During the six miles' ride to Marksville in Joe's rattle-de-bang Ford she listened smilingly to the bantering talk of these two impossibly related brothers, searched vainly for something

of interest in the flat, ugly country stretching out on every side. They bumped off the highway into a deeply-rutted, black cinder-road. They rattled past a group of unpainted clapboard buildings straggling along a few feet off the street within picketed, or semi-picketed yards in which here and there forlorn geraniums and coleus plants struggled feebly for life.

"Marksville," grinned Joe, his teeth cracking shut as they jounced over a six-inch thank-you-ma'am.

The Ondriceks lived out in the country. They hurtled on past ramshackle desolation, flinging out spatters of gray, viscous jelly which Joe said was the result of that morning's rain. She saw ahead of her the Ondricek culm-pile, flat, widespread like the house beside it, a titan's black vomit spewed out over the grass and weeds of what had once been old Pavlek Ondricek's one-horse farm.

Four people stood inside the gate of a treeless yard and waved to them. Evelyn felt dismay gripping her. Would she be equal to this? Paul was laughing.

"Here we are, dearie! There they all are!"

It had been impossible for her to imagine the bleak, bare ugliness of it all. Impossible. She had never in her life imagined anything so unrelievedly hideous. Paul saw her dismay, saw her effort. It was why he had never wished to bring her there. She was here at her own insistence. He concealed a feeling of nervous discomfort beneath a boisterous greeting and introduced Evelyn to his father, his mother, his brother John, his sister Milena.

They spent three days in Marksville, days during which Evelyn did her level best to prove to Paul that she was a thoroughly good sport. It was a mighty severe test of adaptability. The sister she liked, and poor little Mrs. Ondricek. The garage brother was also possible. But these two miners, this old man who sat around in a black-striped, collarless cotton shirt and heavy woolen pants with a button or two unfastened in front and sucked from morning till night on a huge-bowled pipe a black tobacco that stank to heaven; this brother who came at sunset, reeking with sweat and black grime, bringing back to her the recollection of her childhood

terror at Aunt Pru's bogey-man—these two it was utterly impossible for her to connect with her husband except in a horribly grotesque way. But there was a resemblance!

The mother made her heart ache with pity. She was so timid, so broken by a life of slavery. She was so lean, so ugly of feature, yet so soft, so big of heart, so utterly selfless. Milena most resembled Paul. She looked like him. She had the same half-humorous expression in her eyes. It was possible that she had been pretty as a girl—as the old man claimed—but long, long ago her plump good looks had faded, desiccated in the bleak, barren life of this mining-village. Her children were nondescript—stupid, Evelyn thought them.

Evelyn stubbornly refused to go down into the coal-mine. To her it was a pit of horror. She rode with Paul and his sister and brother to see Mrs. Stevens, the younger sister, wife of the country school-superintendent. Her name was Mary. Manya, the old man called her. Papa Ondricek called Joe, Pepiczek, and Paul, Pavlek. Milena he called Milka. Both were pet names. Her real name was Yarmila. While they were eating at Mary's—every time that Evelyn turned around during these days of her visit she found a table piled high with food—Mary suckled the youngest of her six children in the adjoining room and sang to it a little lullaby the melody of which delighted Evelyn. Mary had learned it from her mother. So Mary had to write the words for Evelyn and Evelyn promised that she would learn it by heart, so that she would know at least something of Czech. It began:

"Sla Nanynka do zeli, do zeli,
Natrhala lupeni, lupeni,
Priszel mani Pepiczek,"

and told how Nanynka went into the fields to gather herbs and how Pepiczek came along and smashed her little basket.

Evelyn liked Mary's children, who were all shy and pretty and curtsied when they were introduced to their beautiful aunt. His whole family's obvious awe of Evelyn and attitude of servility toward her secretly annoyed Paul. He pretended it amused him.

On the whole Evelyn acted irreproachably. But Paul was not sorry either when the three days of their visit were up and it was time to make their train. Only when they were leaving did Mama Ondricek lose her embarrassment before Evelyn, throw her arms impulsively about her daughter-in-law and kiss her good-by. Paul she embraced with tears running down her face. She felt now, as she never had before, the gulf that lay between her and her favorite boy. Yet at that moment both were urging her to come to New York for a long visit with them in the fall. That gulf she could never cross. In saying good-by to them she was saying good-by to her fondest hope.

When Evelyn and Paul were settled once more at home Evelyn wrote Mrs. Ondricek a long, cordial letter of thanks for the delightful hospitality they had all shown her. She received a reply from Milena. There, save for Christmas-cards and the like, the correspondence ended.

12

Evelyn was not concerned with commerce, political theories and changes in the map. The far-reaching effects of war are not these. She thought of it in terms of her own children and the children of mothers like herself. With her country's declaration of war logic was eliminated from the situation. The expression of conflicting personal opinion became for her as for millions of others something in the nature of sacrilege. She once more took pride in the fact that she was the daughter of an officer of the Grand Army of the Republic. Her father had offered his life for his country; her first lover had lost it. The memory of Kurt Schelling glowed again to life within her. Were he now alive he might be one of these generals whose names were on everybody's tongue. Two of his classmates were already in France.

Gordon Bradley was at the Plattsburg officers' training-school, Allen in Washington serving at a dollar a year in the war-department, Jane and Betty racing madly about in war-work, proud of their husbands, proud of themselves, hectic

from that sudden unleashing of conflicting passions known in the category of human ailments as war-fever. Evelyn avoided discussion with her husband as much as possible. His social theories, his cold-blooded criticism of much that was seething around and within her made discussion with him increasingly distasteful. It was not merely about the war that they disagreed, or the rightness of what was going on about them. It was on far more immediately personal problems of living. The war was only laying bare radical differences in themselves. She knew that it was not only business-worries and war that made him gloomy.

Business-worries he had in plenty. Building had practically ceased. They had put in a bid for the construction of barracks and docks on Staten Island. Allen had helped. For a time it had looked like a certainty. Then something happened. Paul quarreled with his partners. Mrs. Tarbell bitterly hinted to Evelyn that they had lost out entirely because of Paul's unreasonableness. Evelyn never had the thing straight in her mind. Paul never explained it to her beyond saying that Washington was honeycombed with graft and that half these lousy swivel-chair officers and dollar-a-year men ought to be hamstrung.

Very different with Allen! Allen was far-sighted. His father had been before him. But never to this extent! Allen's two factories were working night and day on army-contracts. Allen's accumulation of leather was turning into a mountain of silver.

One night when Allen was in town on an overnight trip from Washington they all had dinner together. Paul and Allen got into an argument which started with the soup and ended in an all but open quarrel. Even Jane tried to act as mediator. Betty wept. Evelyn thought Paul talked perfectly outrageously. She was disgusted with him.

When they were back in the apartment alone she tried to reason with him. If Allen had called him a Bolshevik it was only because Paul had been so sarcastic about Allen's patriotism. Then Paul vented his spleen on her. He called her a sap-headed sentimentalist. Then she told him perfectly

plainly what she thought of his attitude toward her and her family. She was proud of Allen and what he was doing. He couldn't criticize Allen to her! Well, just who the hell started all the criticizing? Would he stand for these feather-brained fool girls telling him what he should do?—this idiotic bunch of ignoramuses? Is that so! Before he criticized others so much with all his grand wisdom and superiority he'd better go out and do something himself!

Edith's new home dragged along from month to month, uncompleted. Paul was making a desperate effort to have the house ready for occupancy before winter set in. On his return from these trips Paul would give Evelyn news of the Marshall family. Most of it was about Gloria. Probably because Evelyn asked more questions about her than about any one else. He didn't seem to think Gloria an ignoramus. Evelyn wanted to know why Gloria didn't marry this Goepel fellow whom she was leading around by the nose. Paul said he didn't know. It didn't concern him. He was only building a house for her. For her? Well, for her family. Gloria took more interest in it than any one else. Why?—Why? What did she mean, why? Nothing. She had only asked. She thought the house concerned Edith a good deal more than it did Gloria. Maybe it did. Why the argument? If he could only get through with the damned thing. Evelyn supposed he was sorry that she had ever suggested it in the first place. He said:

"Please don't be silly, dear."

And she said:

"It seems I'm built that way."

One evening in the late fall a one-page letter came from Paul. He had been in Chicago a week. He explained that complications would hold him there another several days. He would write again when he knew more definitely when he could leave. That was all, except for formulas which had lost all their old meaning. Paul hoped that she was a little lonesome for him. Also that she was able to see a great deal of Jane and Betty and her grandchildren.

She had not been able to see a great deal of Jane and Betty.

They were too busy with their work, their own life. Gordon would leave for France within the next month. She had not heard from Allen in weeks. Around her was seething a world in war. For the life of her she could not determine what stood between her and this love which had come to her so late, to which she clung with all the intensity of her nature. She was jealous of no thing, or person. He had borne her to a mountain-top from where she had looked down upon a world bathed in light and color. Now, unmistakably, color was fading from objects become nearer and sharper in outline.

She lay that night hour after hour, thinking of the complicated tangle of her life, lonesome for her husband as he could never suspect, to judge from the dozen hasty lines he had written her, persistently closing her ear to the whisper of some one standing in the dark of her room that something other than building-complications was holding Paul away from her.

In the morning's mail she received a letter from Edith urging her to come on for a few days' visit while Paul was there. Edith was giving a dinner on the following Friday to some bankers and government-officials. Evelyn and Paul could go home together. Edith had said nothing to Paul. They would leave it as a surprise for him.

She read this note and reread it. This was Tuesday. Edith said nothing about building-complications; said nothing except that Evelyn ought to come on and surprise Paul. Why? Why, to attend a dinner—and come home with Paul. It was nonsense to think they hadn't told Paul about the dinner. Paul had said nothing about the dinner. Complications. What did he mean by complications? She wired Edith her acceptance and took the night train to Chicago.

Herbert met her at the station. He said that Paul could not leave the job. So they had told Paul of her coming. They all welcomed her heartily. She waited for Paul in the room he had been using and which they would now share. The sight of his familiar clothes and toilet-articles comforted her. Gloria had talked to her with unaffected cordiality.

So Evelyn, after throwing her arms about Paul in greet-

ing, confessed to him how lonesome she had been for him and how Edith's invitation had come like a sudden release from prison. She had just flown to see him again. And was he happy that she had come?

She did not deliberately watch him and Gloria. Had she permitted herself to do so she would have felt contemptible. Gloria's manner with her uncle seemed what Evelyn had always considered it—the behavior of a selfish little simpleton who believes herself supremely attractive to males and camouflages native sensuality behind a veneer of coquetry. But now Gloria's words and gestures of familiarity with Paul—whom she no longer called uncle—were, perhaps, still more distasteful to Evelyn than before; also Gloria's deliberate neglect of her children. Evelyn tried to mother poor little Marie-Louise—and found it extremely difficult. There was also something distinctly unpleasant to Evelyn in Paul's familiar manner toward his niece-by-marriage. Evelyn felt all this. Therefore reasoning did not enter into the matter. She knew that if she mentioned a hint of her feeling to Paul he would take offense.

On the afternoon preceding the dinner-party Evelyn, having tired of Edith's fussing and general nervousness, said she would run over to the new building and bring Paul home. Edith asked her why since Gloria when she had gone out for her afternoon ride had said she would pick Paul up on her way back. It was time for them to think of dressing for the evening. Evelyn insisted; said she absolutely needed a few minutes in the open air. Half-an-hour later she entered the new, almost completed Marshall residence on Lake Shore Drive.

Gloria's car was standing in the driveway outside the entrance. A watchman admitted Evelyn. He said that Mr. Ondricek was up on the second floor. The workmen had all gone home. Yes. Miss Marshall was also somewhere in the house; probably upstairs with Mr. Ondricek.

Evelyn climbed a winding marble stair protected by thick brown matting. She had visited the house the day before with Paul. It had then been full of workmen, masons,

plumbers, decorators. Now the silence seemed funereal. The rays of the setting sun, striking through a great window of colored glass, flooded the bare, upper hall with polychromatic light. Everywhere coarse brown matting stained with lime and paint, littered with shavings, fragments of wood, or stone. She was about to call when she heard voices. She walked toward the sound. She entered a room designed for a library. A room opened off this library which would be Frank's private workroom. Here Paul, as Evelyn knew, had his desk and drawings.

Evelyn heard Gloria's laugh. She stopped dead. There was an intonation to this laugh which Evelyn's finely-tuned ear could never mistake. It was a woman's low laugh of triumph.

"You old—darling!"

For a fraction of a second Evelyn stood in that room designed for Frank's library as though she had been placed there, incongruous, a part of Paul's scheme of decoration. In that instant she felt a shock of memories, concepts, conclusions as a single emotion no more separable into distinct thoughts than are the oscillations of an electric current. What passed through her mind in that instant and the order of its passing she would never be able to explain. But among flashes of scenes between herself and Paul was one that had never concerned him until this instant. It was that of a sitting-room in a cottage on Rocky Point and the sound of a window rattling in an adjoining room and John's face as he glanced, startled, toward a closed door. And among her concepts was that of one trampling under foot the thing that another holds dearest on earth. And among her conclusions was that there, beyond that open door, where she could see it if she stepped five paces forward, was that which she now knew she had dreaded above all things else—the annihilation of her dream.

She turned swiftly, noiselessly and tiptoed out.

She had not gone three steps down that covered stair than she stopped again, dead. Why was she running away? She

turned. She would face these two. She was not thinking. Her capability of reasoning in that instant was non-existent. In this state one commits acts for which no man can judge another.

She came to the entrance to the library. Her steps faltered. She stopped. Weakly she put her hand against the jamb for support. The choked sound of her own voice startled her.

"Paul," she said. "Where are you?"

She heard a sudden movement inside the open door opposite her. She went rapidly to it. What she actually saw was Paul hurrying to meet her and Gloria standing in confusion over by a cushioned window-seat. But what she saw as she entered that room had little relation to her memory of this scene. Her husband's grin may have been one of welcome as he claimed, not one of bravado. The expression on her niece's flushed face may not have been one of fear and hate, but of indignation, as Gloria contended, at the way Evelyn had come sneaking in on them. It was all a confused nightmare. Perhaps she had looked and talked like an insane fury as Paul claimed afterwards. Perhaps she had, as she believed, talked only like a woman distraught at seeing a priceless thing trampled in the mud. What difference did it make? What difference why, or how it had happened—since it had happened? Excuses, explanations could never wipe out that scene, those words. What she lived through in those short minutes was a flame sweeping through a garden in flower. Excuses could put the fire out. They could never restore the beauty it had destroyed.

She hurried out of that unfinished house, leaving them there to calculate the wreckage they had caused. Arrived at Edith's home she hurried straight to her room. Mrs. Marshall, the maid said, was dressing. In her room—his room, their room—she sat dry-eyed beside their bed and considered what she must do. At length she rose and began packing things most needful to her into a suitcase. The process was slow. She would stand seconds at a time holding something in her hands as if she did not know what to do with it. She was still hearing Paul's brutal accusations which were blows

struck in blind rage regardless of whom or what he was striking. The bitter humiliation of that moment! And across her protest cut Gloria's sneering laugh and that exclamation which had stung more than any whip-lash:

"You—old—fool!"

The room-door opened. Paul came in and closed it behind him. For a full minute he stood there and watched her nervously taking blue and rose lingerie from a bureau-drawer.

"Evelyn," he said, finally, as if the words were strangling him, "have you—entirely—lost your mind?"

"My mind is perfectly clear."

"You can leave here, now—without—"

"Yes! Yes!"

"On my word I believe you are insane."

"That's your privilege."

"Where are you going?"

"I don't know."

"I won't let you go."

She sneered.

"Listen, Evelyn. I swear on my honor that I have done nothing whatever, to justify—"

She turned on him, her face flaming with anger and hurt pride.

"You can stand there and dare tell me a lie like that!"

His face turned white. His words came low, staccato.

"Exactly what do you think in your fool mind—"

"You can't insult me any more!" Her voice rose shrilly. "I tell you, I won't listen to you!"

"I beg your pardon." He stopped for a moment; then went on slowly. "I want you to tell me—I ask you to tell me, Evelyn, what you think I was doing—we were doing."

"I don't know what you were doing."

"I will tell you precisely what we were doing."

"I don't care what you were doing. It makes no difference—"

"It doesn't!"

"It's what you intended to do."

"Well, for Christ's sake!—who is to judge what I intended to do? You?—or I?"

"It's not necessary to let every one in the house know that we are quarreling."

"Oh—Jesus!"

She was beyond tears. She had not the physical strength to stand this kind of storm indefinitely. She felt numb.

"Listen, Paul. What you were doing, or what you were going to do matters nothing, nothing in the world to me now. Do you hear? Nothing! You have killed my love—"

"How? Why?"

"I don't know why. Only you know why—"

"If what I did this afternoon can kill your love then it must be a damned anemic love!"

"You once thought it very beautiful."

He groaned. When he spoke his tone had changed.

"I did."

Her voice broke.

"You have told me things to-day I shall never forget."

"You forget what you told me!"

"I never said the cruel things—"

"No! You use polite expressions. Do you think they hurt any the less?" Again his voice rose. "Do you remember what you told me—and Gloria?"

"I never said one word to her that wasn't—"

"You didn't! Do you think you can stand there and denounce her in parlor English for an unprincipled whore and—"

"Paul, I refuse—"

"And get away with it?—Who the hell do you think you are!"

Evelyn's lips trembled convulsively. She was on the verge of hysteria.

"I—I want you—to leave my room!"

"I won't leave the room!" he snapped savagely.

She sank sobbing into a chair by the window.

For a long time he stood silent, staring down at the floor in front of him. The torture of this woman whom he had

so passionately loved—whom again at this moment he passionately loved and hated simultaneously—so tore at his own nerves that he could have shrieked. But the only thing that evidenced instincts which had come down to him through a thousand generations and made him want to rend her flesh, or crush her with a brute's passion was that he stood there biting his lips, nervously tapping finger-ends against his leg.

She was so wrong in all her facts. She was so right in that faint, frail basis of her assumption! He tried to think rationally of what actually might have happened had Evelyn never appeared on the scene. Nothing! As God was his witness, nothing that could justify this brainstorm.

His relations with Evelyn's niece had gradually become such that they were a bit confusing to himself. Gloria undoubtedly possessed physical attraction for him. So had other women. Was that a crime? He had played with her, always on a sort of joking basis. His intimate relation to her family and to her had been a safeguard—that and the very fact that her attraction for him was so purely physical. He had kissed her a half-a-dozen times; for that matter once or twice in Evelyn's presence.

That afternoon when they had heard Evelyn's voice in the room outside they were sitting on the cushioned window-seat and spread across their laps lay a blue-print by which he was trying to explain some troublesome alterations on which Gloria had insisted. She had her arm about his shoulder. She was paying mighty little attention to what he was saying. She was, in fact, a scatterbrain. Not three minutes before he had called her a rattlehead and the damnedest client he had ever had to work for. He had said it smilingly, but he was more than half annoyed. She was making his work a joke—and a costly one. It was perfectly true that he was physically roused by her closeness, her perfume, her obviously suggestive leaning against him. He wasn't a cigar-store Indian! The instant before Evelyn had called he had brushed her hand away from the drawing over which she had spread it and asked her to try for five minutes to keep her mind on what he was trying to explain to her. And she had

put her cheek against his and laughed and said—something or other. Those were the precise facts, as he remembered them.

And what had Evelyn built up out of this? What if he did like Gloria—or didn't like her? Or kissed her, or didn't kiss her? Whose business was it? Did this woman own him, body and soul? Had she the faintest right to tell him at whom he could look, or with whom he could associate, and how? Or what he could do and couldn't do? On what basis did she assume this right? Because she was married to him! Because a thousand incidents for which she was just as responsible as he had by some process of mental juggling rendered him answerable to her for every thought or intention that involved any other woman than herself! The colossal egotism of it!

If she had an inkling of a million thoughts that had come to him in these past months—and years! of a million words that had come to his lips and been forced back again; if she knew the compromises he had made with himself, with his plans, with his work, his wishes, his passions! Whose fault was it if he was hungry for physical passion? How much did she give him? Good God, if she only realized! Did she ever stop to think of the difference between their relations now and—once? And what it must mean to him? Did she ever try to make them what they once were? But that he could forget. He made compromises—many of them—gladly—for the sake of a greater good. And she had made them, too. She had made plenty of them. Everybody made them. But had he ever demanded that she make them? Had he ever presumed to demand of her at whom she looked, with whom she talked, and what about? Or did any one else who had a grain of common-sense? If this was her idea of marriage it was a pity he hadn't realized it ten years ago when she was telling him about her various lovers. What right had this woman to call Gloria Marshall a common—what was it she called her? Good God, it was incredible that a woman could delude herself to this extent!

And all the while Evelyn was sitting over by the window

trying to get hold of herself—unsuccessfully. And Paul was staring down at Edith's faintly figured gray-blue carpet as if he was trying to remember his middle name and couldn't.

He began talking to her in a very low, calm tone. At first she heard nothing of what he said because of her sobbing which wouldn't stop. Later she heard fragments which meant nothing except to show her the immensity of her present misery as compared to this happiness about which he was talking and which he had destroyed. At length, in a dead, dull way she followed what he was trying to tell her.

He kept bearing down upon her weakness with sheer, male mass and tenacity. For two solid hours he talked. In the meantime he shaved. He called it reasoning with her. The only reason she listened to him at all was because she was too unnerved to carry out her original impulse to leave the house immediately. She shrank from an ugly, open family quarrel that could only advertise her intensely private hurt. So much effect his reasoning had upon her.

All the reasoning in the world couldn't lessen the hurt. The more he reasoned the more convinced she was that he had ceased to love her. He hadn't talked like this eight years ago—about his rights and her rights, and what a man would do of his own free will and what he considered slavery. Why wasn't he honest? Why didn't he tell her the truth instead of protesting that it was she who had changed, not he?— She who had changed!

A knocking at their door stopped him. It was a quarter to eight o'clock. A maid said Mrs. Marshall wanted to know when they were coming. They were all waiting in the drawing-room. It was a devilish mess. Paul told the maid to tell Mrs. Marshall that Mrs. Ondricek was not feeling well; that they would be down in ten minutes. By that time Evelyn had been talked into insensibility. She no longer knew what she wanted to do, or where she wanted to be—except that she wanted to be left alone. She promised Paul in a dry, listless tone that she would do nothing rash—in fact nothing at all. She refused absolutely to go down to the dinner. He could make up any lie he chose for Edith's

benefit. She was sick. She was physically ill. She wished she was dead. If she could only die and end it all!

So Paul gloomily asked Evelyn where his handkerchiefs were, begged her to try to think over calmly and fairly what he had been saying and went down to his sister-in-law's dinner-party.

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Later that evening Edith bustled into Evelyn's room breathing hard from the combined effects of food, wine, the excitement of her party still in full swing on the floor below, anxiety over the dickens only knew what. In the meantime Evelyn had had time to think over a fraction, at least, of Paul's two-hour discourse on why they were where they were. Not calmly. Certainly not with what he would have called fairness. Edith bustled out again convinced that her sister was only a little more subject to sudden balloonings than Edith had all her life believed her sister to be.

Very late at night Paul returned and switched on the light. Evelyn had her face to the wall. He undressed. Then he sat on the edge of the bed in his pyjamas. He spent the rest of the night alternately reproaching and pleading with her, asking questions which she did not answer, going into long explanations to which she did not listen. When dawn dimmed the light under which he sat he was still there on the edge of her bed, haggard, exhausted, knowing that he had accomplished little or nothing. As for Evelyn, she was semi-conscious. Then he began to caress her. His caresses only stung again into violence her wretchedness and made her weep convulsively. Then he fell asleep with his arms tight-wrapped around her. And when he was asleep she went crawling around in the dark finding fragments here and there, which were memories, of her once great love for him.

Since Paul received some word the following morning which obliged him to leave immediately for New York and since Evelyn insisted on accompanying him Edith never did learn the real facts hidden beneath Evelyn's sham neuralgia. Gloria, by chance, was out at the time Evelyn left. All Edith

ever had from Gloria regarding the mystery was a curt statement that her Aunt Evelyn ought to wear a "to let" sign on her hat.

When Frank Marshall diplomatically questioned Gloria she acted the scene for her father. They were alone in the library. She put her hand on her father's shoulder precisely as she had had it on Paul's. She bent over the library-table to examine her father's copy of the Evening Tribune exactly as she had been examining Paul's blue-print. And her hair tickled her father's ear. Then she gave him a faint idea of what had struck her when Evelyn had appeared in that other library-doorway. Frank scratched his ear and said reflectively:

"Well, I'll be damned."

When Paul returned, two or three weeks later, the whole incident had blown over. It was mentioned only once—over the cocktails on the evening of Paul's arrival. Frank had smilingly asked Paul if Evelyn had had any more of her—uh—attacks.

"Oh, forget it!" said Edith. It had been her policy through life. It saved a lot of worry—usually over nothing.

"Very true," admitted Paul.

"If I could forget a lot of things," grunted Frank, "I'd take a vacation."

He had only to wait, exclaimed Edith, till this horrible war was over. Then they'd all be able to breathe once more.

"It's your weight, mother; not the war."

"What about my weight!"

Which had the conversation on a safe and solid basis and permitted Gloria to request Paul to take her to the theater that evening, since Chris Goepel was down in Washington protesting this lunatic Volstead bill.

Slowly and in a very different way Evelyn, too, eliminated the incident from her active life. She never forgot it. But when Paul was away from her she did not continue to torture herself with suspicions of his behavior with Gloria Marshall, or with any other woman. It was not suspicion that was casting this shadow over them; it was a certainty.

Something had gone; disappeared apparently forever from their life together. She puzzled over ways to bring it back. They were both trying. It was gone. Not only in him. It was gone in herself. Whose fault was it?

As she became more conscious of this change she became more conscious of her age. She had never felt healthier. But Paul, in some way or other, made her feel that he was comparing her—perhaps not deliberately—with younger women he met, who could bear him children, who were not tied to him. All his former talks and theories came back to her now in a new, a colder and clearer light. He talked very little now. He who had discussed with her for hours at a time every conceivable sort of thing had become monosyllabic.

She had never felt so lonesome as she did this winter at those times when Paul was away from home. Gordon Bradley was in France; Jane, in consequence, wholly absorbed in the war and her Red-Cross work. A few city blocks and a bridged and tunneled river separated mother and daughter. Yet they seemed separated by half the world. She saw almost as little of Allen as of Jane, and nothing at all of Betty. Ever since Mr. Ondricek had insulted her husband Betty Ferris had avoided him as if he were the pest.

A thousand things had crowded in between her and her children, forcing them farther and farther apart. She felt keenly that she was no longer a vital part of their lives. They loved her. But they loved her for what she had been and meant to them, not because of what she was and meant now. She had become a symbol. She had done her part by them. Now she could only stand aside and watch. Perhaps here and there say something, do something that could help. But not teach them. Who could have taught her at twenty-five what life had taught her since? Taught her, that is, so that she could have really understood? She understood so clearly now that only experience through which one lives oneself, is of any vital significance. Not knowledge, or travel or wealth, or position, but just those moments of which others do not even suspect the existence, from which is built up whatever one

is and means in the last analysis to oneself and to every one else.

What a pity that one could only learn all this, could only acquire this capacity for love, for happiness, for usefulness to others when one's body is wearing out and one's usefulness is over! How infinitely more she could now give when no one cared to take because there were wrinkles about the corners of her eyes and mouth, because she could no longer carry mountains on her back, because her body had become sluggish and her breasts flabby. Oh God, if only youth would stay when a woman has learned to know the value of youth!

Evelyn saw a good deal of Edna during this winter. Edna was living at the Chatham. The rapid rise in the cost of living had slowed her somewhat, not the years that had passed. Her dresses were less in number, but richer in quality. Her underwear, which she exposed less because of the reproaches of her mirror, was as dainty and as various as it had been fifty years before. She smoked less, but better tobacco. Her hair was still very black and—perhaps a trifle too plentiful. She had, half in fun, half in earnest, made an agreement with Evelyn that when either one of them, by some unforeseen twist of fate, should happen to die, then the other, no matter where she might be, or what lay between, would come and dress for her last appearance in public the one who had died. For Edna wanted to be as certain of seeming beautifully asleep and looking her summery best in a couch-coffin as she was certain of some day lying in one. And Evelyn was just as anxious about this—while they were discussing it—as was Edna.

The two rarely spoke of the past. The past had never interested Edna in the slightest. Once in a while, of course, it would crop up—particularly John. Edna wondered what he would be doing in the war. He had always been so crazy about Germans. He would have been proud of Allen now! The most wonderful boy that had ever lived! By the way, had Evelyn seen in the morning paper that Senator Dixon was sailing for England and France? No!— Yes. What

would Tommy Dixon do in France? Edna thought perhaps he'd sell them a little Brooklyn real-estate.

Everybody was doing his bit—that is, almost everybody. Even Anna Menosky's son John had quit school and started work in a machine-shop. Then he had been drafted and sent to Camp Upton. Evelyn gave him an outfit that would cost him considerable for excess baggage in case he was asked to pay his way over. In it was a comfort-kit that had caused his sergeant to inquire of Johnnie if he was going over to take a course in a Paris tailoring-sohp.

Summer came; and fall. With it the end of the war and the birth of the millennium. The world sank down, gasping thanks, to read over the fourteen points of Mr. Wilson's new Magna Charta for humanity as a whole. Mr. Wilson, himself, sat down with several other gentlemen, the world still breathless, to set the stage for a piping comedy of peace. In the meantime Paul and Evelyn lived their insignificant lives at home along with a thousand million other unimportant people.

Gordon Bradley returned to Brooklyn a decorated hero. He had shot one and taken prisoner two other Germans—or Austrians, or Poles, or Czechs, or Jews—on whom he had stumbled in a cross-trench on a rainy night in late September. They had hollered Kamerad at him before he had had time to realize that there were three of them and not an army. Jane put her finger on the scar on his arm where a boche machine-gun bullet had pierced his flesh and felt a thrill in which passion jostled exaltation. Allen Ferris returned to Brooklyn, not a decorated hero, but a thoroughly made man. He, too, had done his bit and done it nobly. They all returned, heroes and civilians alike, all toilers in the cause of civilization. Evelyn watched their coming; had, too, her thrill, but neither of passion nor of exaltation. Only of pride, of joy which she shared with her children, of immense relief. All of this she tried to share with her husband.

The birth of Czecho-Slovakia with its capital at Prague capped what the armistice had begun; namely, the reinstatement of Paul into the good graces of all of Evelyn's chil-

dren. The outbreak of the Russian revolution had taught them, likewise, what a Bolshevik really was. They saw that Mr. Ondricek was only distantly related. With the greatest good-nature possible they acknowledged previous mistakes and included Paul in all the family merrymakings. The war, now that peace had come, had made them all so much broader-minded, more tolerant, less hasty in their judgments. They saw the whole world safe for democracy. They all had learned so well what sacrifice means, what struggle, unhappiness, suffering means. They had learned to think of so many things that had never occurred to them before.

So Paul, too, came into his proper place in their scheme of things. They felt him no longer a hostile stranger; his name no longer difficult to pronounce. He, too, was making good. Mr. Ondricek's firm, which a short while before was so sick and wobbly, was getting up on its feet again. Gordon told Jane of the tremendous building-boom ahead. Evelyn's steadfast loyalty to everybody was having its reward. Bygone were bygones.

In the spring of nineteen-nineteen Gloria Marshall did, in fact, marry Chris Goepel. Now that the war was over he was going into politics. He would of course have the Marshall backing. Frank's backing behind Chris' own momentum made Chris look good for anything up to a cabinet-member. The Ondriceks did not attend Gloria's wedding in the new home on Lake Shore Drive. Evelyn's excuse was that Paul's mother had died a month previously.

Evelyn had not gone with Paul to her funeral. Jane had been ill at the time. Jane was to have another baby in October. On his return Evelyn tried to lessen Paul's sorrow, to comfort him. She knew she hadn't succeeded. He thanked her. Then he locked his sorrow away from her. He was that way. She hadn't known it at first. What did he want her to do? What should she do? What did he want to do himself? For the life of her she could never decide. And yet was there a selfish thought in her mind concerning him?—Unless it be selfish to long always, and at times desperately, to be happy with a man.

They rarely quarreled. A quarrel implies passion. The trouble with Paul was that his passion was moribund. Sometimes she thought that it was because he was getting old; sometimes because business worries or disappointment had made him cold like this. Her passion, too, had disappeared. How could it be otherwise? Passion is a mutual thing. Her passion was not dead. It was asleep. He had only to awake it. How differently in the old days had her tiny, timid caress affected him! Was he, with a male's inborn egotism, attributing to her coldness his own waning heat?

She watched his behavior toward other women. She knew that he knew she was watching him. She had his secretary come once to dinner. She dismissed a fleeting suspicion as silly and unfair. Something was wrong. One summer's night she believed she had the solution.

She always saw to it that Paul's clothes were pressed. She had taken his coat from the chair where he had laid it and taken papers from its pockets. He was already in bed. One of these papers was a letter. She was positive that the address on the envelope was in Gloria's handwriting. As she lay in bed that letter glowed over to her in the dark from the table where it lay. Gloria had spent two weeks in New York during the winter. She had come on at least once more for a visit shortly after her marriage. On neither occasion had Evelyn seen her. She only knew of Gloria's visits from Edith's letters. She was certain, now, that Paul had met her. He who had talked so much about perfect frankness between them! In answer to his sleepily mumbled "good-night" she asked him perfectly frankly why he was corresponding with Gloria.

It precipitated a thunderstorm. By the time it was over Evelyn had learned that Paul had in fact seen Gloria at least once, at lunch, with Tom Crandall present; that the letter among his papers—which he insisted on reading to Evelyn against her protest—gave the address of a friend of Gloria's who was about to build a house. Gloria thought Paul might be interested to look into it. It seemed he wasn't. They had had enough of Chicago contractors.

Of this storm there was one flash which stood out above all the others, one which burnt itself into Evelyn's consciousness and left its permanent mark. She saw something in that instant, although it took considerable time for her to realize its true significance.

He had been savagely arraigning her jealousy, her suspicious attitude, her total lack of common-sense, her apparent wish to absorb him completely.

"Is it all you think about?" he exclaimed—"what I think and don't think, or show, or feel, or do? Is that all that interests you?" She laughed scornfully.

"You flatter yourself!"

"What else do you do? Good God Almighty! Have you nothing to do in the world, but worry about me?"

His words stung her into a furious anger. Was such egotism possible? Suddenly the gulf between her present situation and her position ten years before yawned before her.

"You forget!" she cried shrilly.

"I don't forget—anything! What do you read? When do you practice? What do you do? Christ! Are you through?— If you'd do something—yourself—you wouldn't be so damned excited every time I turn around to—to button my pants."

She jumped out of bed as if he had struck her face.

"You disgusting—fool!"

"It's a fact!" he shouted, as if he were choking. "Damn it! It's a fact!"

She stood in the doorway.

"Paul! It's the last insult you'll ever—"

"Do as you damn please!" he yelled.

She ran into the living-room, slamming the door behind her.

It was over.

But it wasn't. Later Paul opened the door.

Slowly, that night, and painfully, they pumped out the water and cleared the decks of their half-foundered craft. Very slowly again they gathered way. Each acknowledged mistakes; each begged the other for forgiveness; each promised to forget and to atone.

Then out of leaden skies came a flash of a very different order; a flash which cleared the air and brought a sudden sun, which burnt out the last taint of suspicion from the name of Ondricek and proved to all of Evelyn's children that they had made no mistake in believing Evelyn's now-remembered prediction that some day her husband would be recognized for what he really was.

The news broke suddenly over them all that the committee in charge of building the new Detroit cathedral had awarded its prize to Mr. Ondricek's design in accordance with which construction would immediately begin on what was promised to be America's greatest cathedral. A country-wide campaign had been mapped out for the collection of funds. Within a month photographs of Paul's drawings, of Paul himself, Paul's name and his firm's name were appearing in colored Sunday-supplements all over the country. His firm was receiving offers, proposals, advertising matter by the hundred-weight. Paul was being asked questions about his life-history and his views on bobbed hair.

The effect on Evelyn of all this was at first stunning. Paul had once or twice spoken to her of his information that the cathedral project had been revived. She had never seriously considered the possibility of this award since those old, unforgettable days of their first love. She talked eagerly to Paul, trying to realize what it meant to him, for in her eyes his fame was now indubitable. Only she and he knew how and when he had created this design. She sharply reproached herself, now, for her petulance, her selfishness of these past years. She felt her love for him renewed. How different seemed Paul's gloomy abstraction in the glare of this sudden day! She made a thousand resolves. When she talked to her children about Paul her pride shone in her eyes.

He had come into his own! While those others whom all had admired in war had worked frantically to destroy, her husband (she had her dates a little mixed) had created on paper and would now build in granite and steel and concrete and marble a monument which would stand a tribute to his

genius long after the work and the names of these others had been wiped from the memory of man.

Evelyn tried to follow Paul's progress as he was called here and there—to Detroit, to other cities, for talks with sub-contractors and makers of building-materials. She had immediately mailed a new subscription to that news-agency which, years before, had sent her clippings regarding her husband's projects. Her old scrap-book filled rapidly. She accompanied him to Detroit as guest of the chairman of the ladies' committee, a Mrs. Ackerman.

She heard a hundred compliments about herself that evening. As for Paul—wasn't it perfectly natural that they should all admire him? Didn't she? Mrs. Ackerman was a vivid little woman, still in the thirties, wife of the president of a concern that made automobile bodies. She was very charming to Evelyn. She had been president of the local Red Cross during the war, had been to France, had done all sorts of things—was still doing them—defying conventions, shocking the old fogies, twisting them all around her sinewy little finger. There was something extraordinarily attractive to Evelyn about her homely little face. Her husband was twenty years older than she. He let Lottie, as he called her, amuse herself with all this endless running about. He grinned good-naturedly while Lottie chattered on across the lunch-table. Evelyn laughed, too; exclaimed that she admired Mrs. Ackerman more than any woman she had ever met. She was such a bundle of energy! For the first time Evelyn realized the possibilities of bobbed hair. Mrs. Ackerman's shorn golden locks fascinated her.

In the summer Allen purchased for one-fifth its normal price a very beautiful estate in the outskirts of Greenwich. It had belonged to a gentleman of German extraction who had guessed wrong about how long it would take America to snap back from the war-strain. Misanthropes have no business owning estates. Allen was an optimist.

In the face of all the gloomy predictions of deflation and collapse he had started an immense expansion of his shoe-store chain.

In August Evelyn and Paul spent a week-end with Allen and Betty on their new place. Paul listened to Allen's plans for renovating the house and improving the land. Evelyn also listened. She also did a lot of thinking. Allen's purchase, Paul's apparent enjoyment there, the proximity of Stamford to Greenwich and of her old home to Allen's new one suddenly suggested to her a possible answer to many, many questions that had been puzzling her.

On the following day she asked Paul to ride over with her to Stamford. Together they went through the closed and gloomy house, sat on the insecure steps of its porch draped in its tangle of honeysuckle and clematis and looked over at their Jewish neighbor's trim lawn. It had taken her over a long, roundabout path sprinkled with pitfalls to lead Paul to where he could see what she now so plainly saw and not betray her object in bringing him there. There was a far-away light in Evelyn's eyes. Paul had been very sweet to her, very much as he had been on that first day of their acquaintance on this very porch. They had talked of that day, of the dinner Aunt Pru had cooked for them, of old Doctor Beebe, who had preached to them of the love of God and whose last official task on earth had been to preach Aunt Pru's funeral sermon. Aunt Pru had rested but a year in her old ladies' home. Then she had gone on to her final rest.

Evelyn reached for Paul's hand and fondled it. She felt its answering pressure.

"If we could only begin all over again," she murmured.

"Let's try," said he.

"Out here, in this beautiful old place—it would be heavenly!"

He smiled a bit wistfully.

"Do you honestly think so, Evelyn?"

She nodded her head. He began looking around as the idea began seeping in.

"Do you know what I would like, dearest," she said eagerly, "for a birthday present?"

She told him her idea of her old home remodeled, with all that was beautiful preserved, but added to, changed, im-

proved into the kind of a home in which they two could in fact begin all over again.

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During that winter and spring as Evelyn watched from week to week her old girlhood home dissolving, changing, growing, taking on color she looked forward with more and more eagerness to the time when they would be living there, finding the resolution of their problems into comfort and peace. She was proud of Paul's skill of which this home he was building for her was a so much more comprehensive proof than anything she had watched him do before. He was indeed a builder. He made an art of it.

When Jane's third baby came early in November Evelyn seemed less excited by its advent than by Paul's plan of remodeling her old room over the kitchen into a bath on a Roman model with attached dressing-room and hot-room which he could have by building dormers and extending the roof. But she was very happy when Jane baptized her baby Evelyn. Gordon's suggestion had been "Blanche." He said the baby looked like a little white lily. Jane said Gordon had probably been sweet on some cocotte by that name over in France. She was named Evelyn Therese after both her grandmothers.

It wasn't difficult to talk to Paul about this fourth grandchild. He told Evelyn not to hesitate if she wished to go over and stay with Jane until Jane was out of the woods. Evelyn said she had no thought of going. There was nothing she could do. Jane had a trained nurse.

Evelyn never quite understood the nature of the lack of sympathy between herself and Jane. It was not estrangement. It was much less harsh and at the same time more fundamental. She thought about it a great deal. It focussed in a way the difference between herself and a great many of this younger generation. There was in them all an inconsiderateness. They were abrupt, outspoken. She thought of her own girlhood, her friends in Rosemary Hall. This younger

generation knew too much, talked too baldly. Girls in their teens of the best families, talked and acted in public with something perilously close to rowdiness. Refinement seemed to have lost all value. There was a defiance about them. It was in the air. It was something radically at odds with all her former conception of what was right and respectable. Paul didn't agree with her. He defended this baldness, explained it. His explanations annoyed Evelyn. They no longer looked at things from the same viewpoint.

Was she, in fact, old-fashioned, her ideas of decency mistaken, and these flappers, as they were called, the normal product of a different age than that to which she belonged? If Paul's assertion was true that the flapper was the sign and symbol of health in a young world, and this vulgarity, this boisterousness, this crass disregard of everything sacred here to stay, then certainly she was old-fashioned—and glad of it.

It wasn't true. It was the effect of war, of the brutality of war, of its loosing of passions. She had seen it coming. She had seen girls getting ruder, bolder. War-brides, elevator-girls, girls still children jostling men in the street, sitting cross-legged in restaurants with skirts above their knees, smoking, drinking cocktails with men on first acquaintance, dancing with strangers in hotels, dances designed for nothing else than to rouse passion, working with their hips in disgusting dances that were all but exhibitions of the sexual act itself. Necking parties! Every boy with a pocket flask.

These were signs of health in a youthful world!

Paul laughed; said she exaggerated. She didn't exaggerate! She had seen—things she wouldn't discuss. She had seen things in her own daughter's home. Allen wouldn't permit it. Thank God he was old-fashioned, too! He wouldn't allow Betty to dance those dances. No decent girl should be allowed to dance them. Shimmy!

"Then they'll have to give up dancing," laughed Paul.

"Then they better had!"

"You're getting old and finicky," said he.

"Thank you!— I deny that!" she added with a rising inflection. "But I have some sense of morality left."

"Oh hell!" said he. "Morals are such an uncertain quantity."

"You think so! I know you do. Well, I don't."

He was grinning. She had learned almost to hate that grin. She called it his "grin of superior intellect."

"What's the difference between drinking whisky out of a flask and chartreuse out of a bottle?"

She flushed. It was an inexcusably brutal question.

"I never did it in public," she said in a low, angry tone.

"That's true. But—"

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself!"

"Listen, dear. I don't mean that as you—I only mean that this question of morality—"

"I don't care a snap of my finger what you mean!"

"Oh—very well."

She left the room. He could talk in this way of the sacredest moments of their love! What had they come to?

And Paul sat there shaking his head, staring at a silver pheasant pecking at silver grapes on the handle of a silver fruit-bowl. And his lips kept forming the word, "impossible."

One week before their wedding-anniversary they moved into their new home. And still her old. The interior had been transformed. Only the stairway with its curved mahogany railing had been left intact. Where had been gloom and stiffness in square-cut angles was airiness, now, and grace. Whites and tans and greens shaded one into the other. The whole had been lifted and flooded with light. The unkempt grounds had been laid out with walks and rock-walls bordered with shrubs and perennials. The huge old elms now towered up to lock branches above a house and garden with which they could be content.

And though Evelyn knew on her twelfth wedding-anniversary that it was impossible for them to begin all over again, yet she was far from unhappy on that day on which they entertained her husband's partners and new friends in this home which Paul had made so beautiful, this home in which her father and mother had lived and died, with which was associated, now, the sweetest memories of her life. She

honestly believed that she could be immensely more useful to him here and now than she had ever been in the past. In that would be her happiness.

In this spirit she entered upon her new life in Stamford.

She read more and more intelligently than in those days when she played with color-schemes in John's library. She no longer accepted at face-value all that she saw in print. She tried honestly and hard to follow her husband's development. If she was not successful it was because it lay along paths impossible to her. But now she did not hesitate to disagree with his opinions. She had learned his limitations. Her own had grown far less obvious. Not one of his friends who came to enjoy her hospitality and left expressing delight at the hours they had spent there but looked incredulous when she showed them pictures of her family and told them she was four times a grandmother. Paul, too, had grown older than he wanted to admit. She saw all kinds of evidences of it in moments when he was far from suspecting that she was observing and comparing.

It was only her hair that made her look older than he. If it wasn't for that— She began looking in earnest at bobs of all varieties in windows, in advertisements, on heads of all ages. She broached the matter to Paul and laughed down his first astonished no! She argued with him.

It cost a terrific struggle; a slow, painful accumulation of courage. Even Edna failed her there.

She went one morning into town. She hurried to Louis's studio. She had that superfluous mass of silver-gray hair shorn and carried to Louis's work-table. She had the remainder waved and dressed with infinite care. She hurried home more excited, more self-conscious, more apprehensive than she had been in thirty-five years. She changed costumes for two hours before he came, studying the effect of each in her mirror, trying pearls, rejecting them for corals, deciding at length on the jade earrings and a diamond brooch. She applied a little more rouge than she was accustomed to use even for formal dinner-parties. She touched those still brown brows with brilliantine. Her mirror told her truthfully that

she was still beautiful—and, oh, the roguish effect of that bob! Now let any assert that she was fifty-five!

She saw Paul coming up the path. She hurried out to the porch to meet him.

He came smiling up the steps and kissed her. He said:

"Great Scott, what are we celebrating?"

She waited a moment. He tossed his newspaper over to a table. Then she said:

"Don't you see anything?"

So he looked at her. Then an expression came over his face of which she could not decide the nature.

"My God!— You've done it!"

Not a word of what her mirror in all candor had told her to be the truth.

She insisted then and always afterwards that her real purpose in bobbing her hair was because it was a thousand times more practical. Anyway she had saved every bit of her old hair which she could wear with evening dress so that no one in the world could ever detect that it had been cut. However, everybody except Paul—and Jane—raved so about her bobbed hair that after once trying out Louis's flat coil of her own hair at a church fair in Stamford Evelyn laid it away in a bureau-drawer for good and all. At length even Paul began to see the light. He admitted that she had lost nothing by the operation except some surplus hair—and had gained immensely in speed at dressing.

Once in a while Evelyn looked with a faint twinge of regret at this surplus hair in her bureau-drawer. Once Paul had played with her surplus hair.

A bobbed head is not always and everywhere a symbol of revolt. There are bobbed heads aplenty which have never been disturbed by thoughts of any kind. But in Evelyn's case, as in that of many and many a woman emerging painfully into more or less clear recognition of previous delusions, the shearing of her hair was an outward manifestation of a shifting of values; a spiritual palingenesis. There were others.

Of all people who knew Evelyn intimately, Paul who knew her best was least aware of the nature and extent of

this shift. He was too close to her, too convinced that he knew all there was to know about her and at the same time too absorbed in his own affairs to estimate truly the significance of those slight, progressive differences in dress, in opinions, in her attitude toward himself and others which evidenced a change in his fifty-six-year-old wife. He was not looking for changes.

Just before the holidays Evelyn had Mr. and Mrs. Ackerman as guests for dinner and the night in her home and so was able to return their hospitality to her in Detroit. Mrs. Ackerman went into raptures over the effect of Evelyn's bob. Evelyn did, in fact, look rather stunning that night in a dinner-gown of pale silver brocade and her necklace of pearls. Had Evelyn studied for weeks instead of only minutes she could have hit on no more effective contrast to Mrs. Ackerman's gown of apricot chiffon-velvet and Mrs. Ackerman's very golden hair.

Beside the Ackermans Tom Crandall and the Tarbells were there and a young Danish composer whom Mrs. Ackerman had discovered. She had discussed his work with Evelyn at the time of Evelyn's visit. She had also given Evelyn one of his compositions. Evelyn had played it for Paul on their return home. It was called "Fog." Paul had grunted:

"There's no doubt about it."

During the dinner an argument arose on the subject of "jazz," with Mrs. Ackerman and her protégé as principals in the debate. Evelyn grew excited. She had a thousand things to say in support of this boy against heavy odds. With her it was a vital matter. The others were joking. The young composer kept looking at her soulfully. In a short time music was all mixed up with flappers and short skirts and the Volstead law and Mayor Hylan and what started the war—all of which gave Paul a chance to launch off into one of his tirades about human bondage in general. Evelyn amusedly watched Mrs. Ackerman listening absorbed in Paul's harangue.

Then Evelyn sprang her little surprise. She excused herself from the table and went in to her piano. She played, one after another, three of her guest's "tone-poems" which she

had been practicing ever since she knew she was going to have this party. When she turned around on the bench they were all standing or sitting behind her. The young composer leaped up in ecstasy.

"You play divinely!" he cried, with tears in his eyes. "Oh! I shall never forget this night! My poor compositions! You play them far better than I! You—know me!" He kissed her hand, Danish fashion, overcome with emotion.

Well. That ended the jazz-flapper debate.

Very late that night Paul said, sleepily:

"You played awfully well, dear. Honestly. I haven't heard you play like that in—a long time."

"I dare say," she answered drily. "You never hear me—or see me." He winced. But it was very late. And it had been a delightful evening. "If I was Mrs. Ackerman—"

"Oh, God, Eve, don't start an argument!"

"I'm starting no argument," she said very pleasantly. "Good-night."

"Don't you like Mrs. Ackerman?"

"I think she's a perfectly charming woman—a very unusual woman."

Pause.

"Funny combination," mumbled Paul. "I don't remember his saying—"

"How could you?"

"How could I—what?"

"Oh, never mind."

"Do you?"

Pause.

"Did you tell Ivy to call you to-morrow?"

"Yes. I have to get the seven-forty-five."

During the following summer Evelyn had the opportunity to observe at close range a full-fledged specimen of the genus flapper pruning its feathers and stretching its wings in practice flights. Edith Marshall stopped off for a week's visit with Evelyn on her way to join Gloria at Newport. With her grandmother was eighteen-year-old Marie-Louise. Marie-Louise fascinated Evelyn. She had every quality, was letter-

perfect in every particular that had once seemed to Evelyn the antithesis of what a girl of eighteen should display. Evelyn tried to imagine Grandma Sheldon entertaining Marie-Louise at afternoon coffee, tried to imagine Aunt Carrie's consternation, Aunt Pru's horror at this vertiginous prototype of sin incarnate had they been present on Allen's porch on the afternoon that Marie-Louise treated her assembled and highly amused aunts and uncles to an imitation of a Chicago mother doing the bunny-hug. How would they have received Marie-Louise's off-hand remark to her and Paul that she was going to sleep with a regular man one of these days to find out what all the talk was about?

And yet, reflected Evelyn, Marie-Louise was far from what Aunt Pru and Aunt Carrie would most undoubtedly have believed her to be. Marie-Louise had a ruthless self-reliance, a canniness, an appalling frankness, which, in degree if not in essence, were beyond the ken and reckoning of the generation of Aunt Pru. Was it the result of the speeding up of life in general, or was there here a more fundamental difference?—the difference, for example, between this flapper's ideas about marriage and motherhood and her own at eighteen. And in favor of which?

It was Paul's attitude toward this irrepressible little scapegrace that annoyed Evelyn more than the girl herself. Marie-Louise began for some reason calling her uncle-by-marriage "Paulie-boy" on the second day of her visit. She sat on his lap, searched his pockets, asked how often he shaved, said if he'd build a house for her she'd come and be his sweetie.

One afternoon when Allen and Betty were calling Evelyn sat talking to Allen where she could see and hear Paul and Marie-Louise out on the porch. Allen was telling her about his proposed trip to England in the fall. Little Peggy sat on her grandmother's lap and played with her coral necklace. Marie-Louise was teaching Paulie-boy to toddle. A loud needle on the Sonora was bellowing out the Alabama Blues from one of the dozen latest records Marie-Louise had bought in the village. Edith occupied the hammock-corner of the porch. It was just where the hammock used to hang in the

old days on the old porch. Betty was sitting on the steps giggling. Their Jewish neighbors were playing croquet.

"Naughty, naughty!" shouted Marie-Louise. "Don't pinch me that way. I'm ticklish! U-u-h-h!"

"Who's pinching you, monkey!"

"Aunt Evelyn! Come see your husband toddle! He's some baby!"

Evelyn caught a certain expression flitting over Allen's face. She, too, tried to laugh.

"Why don't you come along with us?" asked Allen, referring to his plan of taking Betty with him to Europe.

A week before this she had declared it impossible. Suddenly it seemed not only possible, but necessary.

It was not, she argued with herself, that she was a killjoy, or that she misunderstood the childish nature of this horse-play. It was because she understood the nature of that fleeting expression on her son's face as he had glanced over toward their neighbor's lawn.

When she and Paul were alone in their room that night and he had asked her what was the matter with her she told him flatly that she thought he was carrying it too far with this child. Paul flew into a fit of temper. Among other things he called her a damned crank and an old fossil.

"You make yourself ridiculous!" he exclaimed, disgustedly.

"You don't seem to realize what an exhibition you make of yourself!" she retorted. "Perhaps you really believe that you're fascinating to a girl of eighteen. Can't you see she's making a fool of you?"

"Is it any of your business?" he growled.

"I—yes. I—"

"It is! Well, I'll be—"

"I don't care what you do, but as long as this girl is in my house I insist that she show a little respect—"

"Your house!"

"And I'll tell her so to-morrow."

"By God, you do and you'll regret it! Do you hear?"

"All right. I'll regret it!"

Her voice had grown shrill. She was trembling with anger.

The incident on the porch was not causing this flare-up. There lay an immense lot beneath and perilously close to the surface. Paul's behavior with Evelyn's great-niece was to Evelyn only one more indication of his whole attitude toward her and their life together.

"I mean what I say," said he in an ugly, threatening tone which only for a moment frightened her.

"It's not enough to make love to the mother," she went on, bitterly, recklessly. "You must make a fool of yourself over this—"

"Will you—shut up?"

"No! I won't!"

"Then go to the devil!" he shouted and slammed out of the room.

It was the second time a husband had run out on her and slammed the door behind him.

She sat for a time in a ferment in which anger predominated. Thoughts came and memories whirled up and under again before she could fairly distinguish them. Hour after hour that night she sat, or lay, trying to find some kind of order in this chaos.

She had been low before, but never as low as this. She had had bitterness in her life, but never this vulgarity. She was appalled at the realization of the pass to which they two had come. This same man who had carried her to a height of happiness lost now in cloud had plunged her into a wretchedness which once she would have been incapable of suffering.

Two days later Edith and Marie-Louise left, two days during which Edith had convinced herself that Evelyn's experiment with a second husband was a dismal failure, that Evelyn herself had learned nothing in forty years. Edith was sorry for Paul Ondricek. He was such a nice fellow. And was doing so well in business. She was out of patience with Evelyn's pretense—her bobbed hair and morning exercises, her short skirts and refusal to eat properly because it might add to her weight. What the dickens did she imagine? that she could fool people—with four grandchildren? This grand dame business—expecting a husband to run around and

wait on her. Ps—s—s! Who the deuce wouldn't get tired of that kind of thing?

In September Evelyn sailed with Allen, Betty and little Peggy. As the time of her departure had approached she had weakened, had confessed to Paul that she was going not because she wanted to, but because she thought she ought to go, because he wanted her to go. He told her how mistaken she was. And all their past disagreements were buried in the face of this rapidly approaching separation. When she left Paul she wept, feeling miserable at being dragged against her will as it were, from all that held her so tightly. In that moment she loved him passionately.

She did not recognize her love as pain from the wrenching loose of deeply rooted habits. She had not been thirty-six hours at sea when she began to feel glad that she had gone.

Six months later she returned. For six months she had had time and the opportunity, undisturbed by physical contact, to think of her life with Paul and of herself as distinct from him. Her letters to him had contained for the most part descriptions of what she had seen and impressions which places and people had made on her. She had more than once surprised him by her ability to put her thoughts into words. For the first time he realized the extent of the change that had come about in Evelyn during these years of their marriage. The woman who was making these observations on men and customs and things done by man had made enormous strides since she had sat and listened to him on the beach at Shippan Point. Her letters brought him pleasure and sharp regret. They contained little enough of the impetuous abandon, the joy of those letters she had written him in the first months of their love and which still lay tumbled in a tray of his trunk. Was it his fault, after all? How many times had he bitterly reproached her to himself, violently reproached her to her face; been abusive, been frantic in the face of her willful misunderstanding, her coldness, her suspicion of him that had become a goad?

Too late! Too much had passed between them. Go on—like everybody else apparently. It depended on how far they

were both willing to compromise. For the rest he had his work. Next week was a meeting of the Cathedral committee. He had a dinner-engagement with Lottie Ackerman.

Evelyn met Paul at the foot of the gangplank as she came from the steamer on her return. The rest of the party of welcome were beyond the customs-barrier. For a fraction of a second she looked straight into Paul's eyes as she had written she would do. He was crying out to her a welcome, laughing happily as one laughs at such a moment after so long a separation from one who has been so intimate a part of oneself. Then she put her arms about him and kissed him. She laughed, too, and exclaimed:

"I'm so glad to see you!"

In that moment the thought flashed through Paul with a thrill of pleasure that bygones should be bygones, that she looked wonderfully fit and fine, more beautiful than he had realized her to be for a long, long time and well worth every compromise that the situation called for. They would start afresh. And in that same instant the realization flashed through Evelyn that what she had looked for was not there. She knew, now, definitely that never more in this world could Paul be what he once had been to her.

15

A week later Evelyn was arranging in a bureau-drawer a few odds and ends of her Paris purchases. She had returned an hour before from a ride with Betty and little Peggy. Just as she had been about to leave the house early in the afternoon Paul had telephoned to urge her to come into town for dinner that evening and arrange to stay over night since he had to be in his office very early the following morning. Mrs. Ackerman had unexpectedly arrived in town with the chairman of the building-committee and had asked him and Tom to dine with them in order to discuss various matters concerning the cathedral. Learning of Evelyn's return Mrs. Ackerman had asked Paul to urge Evelyn to join them. Evelyn had declined. She had not felt like changing all her plans and hurrying into

town. She had less than no desire to see Mrs. Ackerman. She had told Paul to enjoy himself. She would use the evening to complete her unpacking. Paul had continued to coax until she had told him that Betty was waiting for her. Then Paul had rather hastily said good-by.

She felt thoroughly annoyed at Paul's assumption on the basis of which he had accepted Mrs. Ackerman's invitation and planned to stay in town over night. Then her common-sense told her that annoyance was unreasonable. Her week had been a busy one. There had been her day with Jane in Brooklyn, the giving of her presents, her visit with Edna at the Chatham, dinner with Tom and Joe, the thousand details incident to settling once more into the routine of housekeeping. Her home had been closed until just before her arrival. Paul had shared an apartment in town during the winter with Tom Crandall.

The firm was busy with several fairly large operations in addition to their part of the cathedral work. The award of the cathedral-contract had marked the definite turn in their fortunes. Crandall, Tarbell and Ondricek was mentioned, now, among the more important building-concerns of the city. Their offices occupied half a floor in the same old office-building where once they had had two small rooms.

Evelyn was glad to be back in her cozy home with all its familiar objects around her; yet indefinitely disappointed. Paul had told her of his winter alone. There seemed to be little to tell. He had been very busy; had had the Andersons with him at Christmas, had seen the Ackermans several times. Milena and Joe had come on for a week's visit at Easter. His father had been ill.

She, on the contrary, had a thousand things to talk about. And yet—what had they discussed? She had told him of the day she had spent in the cathedral at Chartres which some people had claimed to have been imitated by Paul in his design for the Detroit cathedral. She discussed intelligently with him its similarities. She did not tell him that she had sat for hours and hours in that great transept and thought over their life together step after step, year after year. Somehow,

now that she was sitting beside him, he seemed less close to her than he had on that day in Chartres. She could not now talk to him—as she had planned.

It was not that he seemed uninterested in what she was saying. It was because it all seemed unimportant to herself now that she was with him again. Much of it went out of her mind altogether. So all her talk had been of externals and what she had wanted to discuss with him when she had been far away—things vitally concerning themselves—remained unsaid.

Therefore she was disappointed. She had felt so from that first instant of their meeting on the wharf.

Now as she was laying things away in her bureau-drawer she was thinking of this discouraging change that had come over her own self regarding Paul. During these months away from him she had looked forward with honest pleasure to living with him again. As day after day on her return trip had brought her ever nearer to him she had grown more and more eager for him. And then—two nights before this her feeling of strangeness had become acute.

He had been caressing her. Suddenly the realization had come over her that she was pretending. The thought had shocked her. His caresses had something about them almost repulsive. In that moment she had a weird feeling as if she were reliving a previous existence. When she had been younger she had had such moments often. But not for years. It was a moment of clairvoyance, as if she could foretell precisely what he would say and do, precisely what expression would be on his face were the room light. Not quite—but almost; as if she had lived through all this once before, exactly, minutely the same experience, with every gesture, every word, every sensation a duplicate. She had remembered how one time John had bitterly blamed her for her coldness. But that was very different! At that time she had not known what passion meant.

She found herself staring at her mother's photograph over the bureau. A flood of memories, confused, unrelated, came welling up from the depths of her past. In this very room

her mother had once lived and thought. In this moment it seemed as if her mother's presence hovered there. She looked in the mirror and then at the photograph below it. It might have been her own—except that her mother's face was more youthful, more joyous, in spite of a certain expression of sadness about her beautiful eyes. Her mother's eyes were more beautiful than her own—and yet the same. Times innumerable she had looked at this photograph; never with so vivid a sense of intimate relationship. Her mother had been forty-two when she had died—the same age as she herself had been when she had married Paul. Good heavens, was that possible?

Her bureau-drawer was open. In it lay, neatly arranged, the pretties she had bought in Paris, underwear of the sort which from childhood she had loved to fondle. All were of the colors which had always been for her most beautiful, of the colors which seemed to belong, as it were, peculiarly to herself. She pushed shut the drawer.

She noticed lying on the bureau-top a tiny flower of silk attached to a still tinier silken leaf. She picked up this flower, one of those exquisite touches that lend to a garter, an undervest, a nightgown a particularity, an individuality—a dainty conceit to express a dainty personality. She examined it minutely. Her brows drew together in her characteristic frown of thought.

Just such a flower as this could have become loosened and dropped as Evelyn had dressed, or undressed before this mirror—except that Evelyn's silken flowers were not in the habit of dropping from her underwear. It could have been torn off accidentally, for example, from a pair of her silk bloomers, or from the shoulder strap of her combination. But Evelyn could not for the life of her think of the particular bit of lingerie from which this particular flower could by any possibility have fallen.

She picked up a pair of gloves which she had worn that afternoon and called her upstairs maid. She was a new girl who had come to her three days before.

"Have these gloves cleaned for me to-morrow, please."

"Yes, ma'am."

"I'm so glad you found this little flower. It's so hard to match it. Where did you find it?"

"When we were turning the mattress, ma'am. I said to Ivy you'd be missing that."

"Yes. Thank you."

The girl left. Evelyn sat down by her table and stared at this flower of vivid gold attached to its leaf of apple-green. Never in her life had she worn a garment that could have been trimmed with these colors without hurting her sense of fitness. Certainly never in her life had she owned the piece of underwear which this particular flower had adorned.

In her bed!

Rapidly her thoughts speeded up until they became a whirl of conjecture from which sprang beliefs ready-shaped and hardened swiftly into convictions. She held in her fingers the key to her own hitherto unexplainable restlessness and disappointment, the explanation of Paul's manner toward her since her return, the answer to a hundred questions which she had left unasked. While she had been honestly wrestling with the whole problem of her life with Paul, making valiant effort to force back impulses antagonistic to their continuing together he had been here, in this room; in her bed— It was disgusting! She stared at this tiny golden flower. Swiftly she strung together unrelated incidents into a chain of sequence and arrived at a conclusion which seemed to her to have been forced upon her as a certainty. She was unconscious of the leap in logic which she took to associate this golden flower with Mrs. Ackerman's golden hair. For Evelyn in that moment the deduction was as irrefutable as if she saw them there before her. So vividly before her was the scene in this room between her husband and this woman that had Evelyn stood in that doorway and caught them there in her bed in *flagrante delicto* she could have felt no more acutely the rage and the humiliation which her conviction stirred to a kind of fury within her.

She sat before her table in that room where hovered the spirits of her ancestors while incidents and scenes of her life since childhood streamed past her like debris caught up in a

hurricane. That which lent intolerable bitterness to her situation was the fact that what had happened had happened in this room, this home sacred to her from a thousand happy memories of her own past and from countless associations with those nearest and dearest to her. It was this that roused in her a furious resentment.

A realization of the depth to which she had sunk came over her with a rush of tears. She felt unspeakably alone, swept into despair by a storm too powerful for her to combat, an old woman with all she had done, or tried, or hoped to do gone down in wreck and failure. In this mental torment which came over her in waves like spasms of physical pain her bitter humiliation seemed to her a punishment of her own past sins. She, too, had been faithless. As she had measured so had it been measured out to her. As Paul had treated her so had she treated John. Now she was feeling what John had suffered, silent and alone. The memory came of that last night with John, a vision of that bloodless face and hanging jaw, of those black, accusing eyes. She shuddered. She groaned aloud. Memories that were furies lashed and stung her as she sat there white and tense beside her table with that little silken flower crushed in her tight-clenched hand.

Her anger against Paul was stifled beneath her self-reproach. She relived mistakes that had lain buried beneath the experience of half a lifetime. And then, in this white heat of her suffering thoughts began to take on shape.

A knock at her open door startled her. Her maid announced that dinner was served. Evelyn rose hastily and went over to her bureau. She would not be down to dinner. They should clear the table. No. She wished nothing. If she did she would call. Evelyn did not see the expression on her maid's face nor hear the sound of her own voice. She closed her room door and freed its snaplock.

This interruption, this physical movement served to break the stream of her thought and shunt it sharply into other channels. Walking, she realized that there was ground beneath her. Gradually as when light steals over a waking world facts and causes began to stand out in what had before

been obscurity. She reviewed much of the thinking she had done in previous months. She began to reason with herself.

Now, at length, she saw how many of the disappointments of her life were the consequences of her own fundamental mistakes, how much of her own past unhappiness was the inevitable result of conditions which she herself should never have permitted to arise. For the first time in her life—and she had lived fifty-seven years—she looked squarely at herself unblinded by previous theories, or by obligations to others real or assumed.

In the light of this culminating fact of Paul's faithlessness it seemed to her that her whole conception of the relation of a woman to a man in marriage had been wrong. Marriage as she had thought of it as a girl and through all her married life with two men as different as two men well can be, had been, in plain fact, a romantic absurdity. Her old girlhood notion, which had been fastened on her she knew not how or when, that marriage in some mysterious way changes the whole nature of a woman's personal problem was arrant nonsense. It did nothing of the kind. It only added enormously to its complexity. It was this mistaken idea of hers that had eaten at the heart of her happiness and made a failure of both her attempts to live her life successfully as the wife of a man.

She had allowed them both to dominate her. She had subjected herself to them. That had been her conception of what love meant to a woman. It had been a stupid blunder. As one sees differently in a sudden flash of lightning the sharp outline of a long familiar object she saw now that to hold at once a man's love and her own interest in life a woman must recognize man's love to be what in fact it is—an accident; that the woman who permits marriage to weaken her ability to stand alone, to render abortive her previous plans for work in the world, to make of her a subordinate, destroys by her own act any hope of permanent happiness either for herself or the man she marries; that the woman who subjects herself to a man's instinct for domination, a man's egotism, inevitably loses what she thereby hopes to attain.

Suddenly she saw the rightness of the flapper. These

modern girls had not merely will and strength and courage. Instinctively they knew what it had taken her a lifetime to learn—and at what a frightful cost! They were right—notwithstanding their crudity and ignorance—because they were the product of a society which had lost its superstitions and had learned to look unafraid at facts. Had she at the time she married John Ferris been capable of treating him as an incident in her own life as she saw it shaping before her and had not subjected herself body, mind and soul to him, their marriage could not have made of her a hypocrite and a coward and of him a soured misanthrope who in his way was just as much a hypocrite as she.

Again with Paul, in a different way, believing herself to have learned so much by bitter experience she had made the same blunder of trying to identify her life with that of another, of allowing a man's influence to change the very colors of earth and sky for her! She had then all but deluded herself into believing the cause of failure in her marriage with John to have been physical. And now in these last years she had been stupidly telling herself something very similar about her marriage with Paul. Neither of them had told her the truth. Neither of them had known it. Both had been content to take what they found and let it go at that. Why in the world had she not done the same!

Bitterly she told herself that it is the woman who pays in marriage, pays at every turn until at length she goes bankrupt and the thing is called a failure! Bitterly she asked herself by whom and how this absurdly exaggerated notion had been drilled into her of the sacredness of marriage, of the spiritual significance of the physical relation between a man and a woman. Now she knew that she had mistaken a surface-indication for the root of failure that lay far deeper and was incalculably more vital to happiness than any physical circumstance. It was not a question of youth, or age, or any accident of physical contact.

Had she at forty-two learned anything, had she gone on with her own life and freshly roused ambition, gone on to do the things she had been eager to do when Paul had been her

lover and not her husband, done things herself, regardless of him, in spite of him—and what matter if they were important, or unimportant?—she would not be sitting here now—a stupid blunder!

It was her fault as much as Paul's. Perhaps it was the fault of neither, perhaps the fault of marriage which creates within itself the germ of its own decay. Marriage in the sense she had always understood it and tried to live it was a foredoomed failure.

When she had walked alone she had been strong. When she had been free she had been capable. From the moment she had substituted a man's love for her own independent interest in life she had not only begun to retrograde herself, but to lose that love for the sake of which she had made this substitution. At last she knew that she could stand alone! That she had her own life still to live and in her own way. At last she knew what she had to say to Paul. For the first time in her life she saw clearly where she stood, knew what she wanted and why she wanted it.

To-morrow she would go; not for long—only to avoid a useless scene. What she had to tell him she would leave for him to read. She would go to Allen's for long enough to give Paul an opportunity to move his things. This she would insist on. This was her home, not only legally, from every other conceivable viewpoint. He must go. He must go out of her home as he must go out of her life—completely. She had not the slightest wish to see him, or to hear his explanations, excuses. Whether or not he had any desire to make any was also a matter of indifference to her. Her love for him was dead. Her need of him, her interest in him was at this moment as non-existent as if she had never known his name. It was a question, not of blame, but of fact. They both had been at fault.

As she wrote this message which she would leave for him it never occurred to her that Paul was at that moment enjoying himself with the woman who had spent passionate hours with him in this very room. Evelyn had traveled far in these hours since that thought had roused in her a fury of

resentment. It may not have been Mrs. Ackerman at all. Whoever it had been made, now, not the slightest difference to her. The fact itself had lost its sting. She would sleep in that bed from now on alone.

So she began her letter to Paul.

"Dear Paul," she wrote. "This will be the last letter you will ever receive from me." She stopped, suddenly aware of the tremendous difficulty of disentangling into words all that she had to say to him. "How many, many letters I have written you!" And again she stopped, submerged beneath a swift flood of memories of letters she had written during those months before their marriage when her love for him had brought into her life a happiness immeasurable. And silent tears ran down her cheeks. Her bitterness had softened into sorrow; the words she was writing were not those which she had at first intended to write. This letter which she had meant to be a curt note of information and farewell lay heaped on the table before her and she had lost all consciousness of time and place.

She was telling him of the beginning of her love for him and how its coming had seemed the realization not only of all her dreams, but of all her capabilities as a woman; how little by little through the years of their life together she had watched that love sicken and fade, had tried as best she knew to keep that love from dying. She was telling him how clearly she now understood why her marriage to him had been the greatest blunder of her life, so full of mistakes; how she had never realized until this night the real cause of his reluctance to marry her. "I see, now, so clearly, that it was not the difference in our ages, as I then feared, that threatened—"

A knock at her door sent a shock of fright through her.

"Hello, dearest!" During those hours of storm through which she had passed Paul had receded to an enormous distance from her. She glanced at the clock on her bureau. It was a quarter of two. She rose in a kind of daze, went to her door and opened it. Paul stood there grinning cheerily at her.

"Have I waked—good heavens! Are you still dressed?" He saw the expression on her face, her involuntary step back-

ward. "What's the matter! What's happened?" For a moment she was physically unable to reply. "What's the matter, I ask you?" His tone was a shade sharper.

"There's a very great deal the matter, Paul." He stared at her white, drawn face and a frown spread over his own. He recognized at once this expression, this tone. Again! Another brainstorm in the offing! Not a week home and the same old— "Why have you come back—at this hour—"

"I'm sorry if my coming annoys you. I certainly had no such intention."

"It doesn't annoy me." She turned away from him and gathered together the sheets of the letter she had been writing. "I had hoped—I was writing to you."

"What about?"

For a moment they looked squarely into each other's eyes. Then Paul knew that this was no brainstorm. It was not anger that he saw in her eyes. It was dislike.

"I was writing to tell you that you and I can no longer live together."

He started. It was not only her words; it was her quiet tone of finality that startled him. For a moment he stood there silent, letting the significance of this sink in and trying to think of an immediate cause.

"You—mean that?"

"Yes," she said in a very low tone. "I mean it."

"Do you mind telling me the cause of this very sudden—"

"It's not sudden. You've been bringing me to this point for years, Paul. I was too stupid, or too—something—to realize what you have wanted for a long, long time. I realize it now. It has taken a good deal to kill my love for you."

There was no bitterness in her voice.

"What I have wanted, you say?"

"Yes."

"You are so certain that you know what I have wanted!"

"Yes." She ignored his sneer. She was staring at the floor before her. "I know, now, why you have wanted other women in your life, younger women; why I have not been able to satisfy you—"

"Because you haven't tried!"

"I've tried every way I knew how—for fifteen years. You may not think so."

"No! I do not!—not for the last five. Perhaps you call this trying."

"Paul, I'm through trying. I don't want to quarrel with you. We've had too many and too bitter quarrels. We've both made mistakes; I as well as you. The whole thing has been a mistake. I don't regret it. It has been worth all it has cost. I owe you a great debt. I don't forget that. In a way it has cost you more than it has me. I never forget that I am ten years older than you. But you have still your life ahead of you—still the best years of your life to live. I leave you free to go and live it as you please."

She sat down in the chair which she had left at his entrance. Slowly she ran her fingers over the crease in her folded letter. The tiny golden flower lay disregarded on the table beside her. Paul began pacing nervously up and down the room. At length he broke the silence.

"You speak of costs and of trying." The bitterness in his tone deepened as he went on. "It's a little late to rehearse past headaches. If you think you're the only one who has tried you're entitled to your opinion—"

"I don't say that, Paul."

"Our life together for years has been—impossible for any man who is not a fossil. I say you have made it so. You say I have. At any rate it's a fact. You say I want younger women. Very well. I do! I don't want anything that you have not given me in boundless measure in the past. I don't want anything that you could not give me to-day. It's not a question of sexual intercourse. I'm not an animal. It's a question of the whole psychology of a man and a woman that underlies physical passion. Why shouldn't I want it? But I'm not blind to the fact that there are other important reasons for living, or that there are compensations. God knows I'm not. But you—if it's because you are fifty-seven years old, I'm sorry. I don't believe it. The fact is that our whole

life has become a habit. If I have gone with other women—and I have, I don't deny it—it's because you have made assumptions that are intolerable!"

"Very well. I make them no longer." Her voice was barely audible. It was as if something had snapped within her at this bald confirmation of all her self-torturing reflections, leaving only a numbness behind. After a moment's silence she continued dully: "I don't know what you mean by intolerable assumptions. As far as I know I have made only one—"

"It's absolutely unfair," he interrupted, "for you to imply that this situation is due to my fickleness, or—"

"I imply nothing, Paul. What difference does it make who is to blame?"

"None," he said gloomily. "None." He continued to pace nervously back and forth before her, she to stare at the carpet at her feet. "It's incredible," he muttered. "It's incredible that two people like you and me—who marry as we did, when we did, should allow themselves to drift into—into this kind of wretchedness. I can't understand it. I remember talking to you about marriage the first day I met you. I've told you myself a thousand times that never in God's world would I permit you and me to make the stupid blunders that wreck nine marriages out of ten. I can't—there's something fatal about it; something—"

She stood up hastily. She, too, spoke bitterly, but in her voice was a new note which Paul was far from gauging rightly at that time.

"That's nonsense! It's complete nonsense! It's the kind of twaddle to which I have listened credulously all my life. There's nothing whatever fatal about it. The plain fact of the matter is I have all my life been a romantic little fool. The sad part of it is that after fifty years I have found it out." She held the folded letter to him. "Some time—not now—I want you to read this. I have not finished it. It isn't necessary."

He took the letter. He saw the trembling of her hand.

"It's you who are doing this, Evelyn."

"Yes." She saw the crushed flower on the table. She

picked it up and held it out to him. "Give this to your—new friend—with my compliments."

He looked at the thing stupidly.

"What do you mean? What is it?"

"It's a—souvenir." He took the flower. "Tell her my maid found it in my bed."

"What in hell are you talking about?"

"It doesn't matter, Paul. It's over." She smiled bitterly. "It's one of those little things which make theorizing rather—ridiculous."

"What have I to do with this thing?"

He threw it on the table. She sneered. She looked at him angrily, not because of what he had done, but because he was acting a lie before her.

"Have you ever had a woman in this room in my absence?"

He returned her stare, equally angry.

"I have not."

"Listen, Paul. I really don't care. I honestly do not. It's not necessary—unless you wish, of course, to protect Mrs. Ackerman—"

"Evelyn! Leave Mrs. Ackerman's name out of this. Do you understand? This is between you and me."

"Very well. You have had some one, then—I don't care who it was—in my bed." They glared at each other. "Have you?"

The instant which intervened between her question and his reply left them strangers.

"I have answered your question. The fact that you ask it—as you do—makes any further discussion between you and me impossible."

She sneered.

"Paul, why do you lie to me?"

"Lie to you! Damn it! Who in hell has given you the right to call me a liar? If so much of your own life had not been a god-damned lie you wouldn't be so free with your accusations!"

She turned away. Her face was very white.

"Then I have made a mistake."

"You have!"

Her words came cold and dead.

"One more mistake—what is one more mistake more or less among so many?"

"Nothing! Nothing whatever."

He turned abruptly and left the room. For a long time she stood motionless by her table. Then she went to her room-door, closed it, locked it, stood again for a moment as though trying to think where she was and what she had to do. Then slowly she went to her bureau and began to loosen her dress.

16

On a Saturday afternoon in late summer of the year nineteen twenty-six several couples jazzed about the porch of the most attractive-looking residence along the main street of Stamford. The shrub-bordered walks of its grounds were sprinkled with leaves that seeped down from giant elms. Grounds, porch and living-room were gay with flowers. Through open door and windows came a riotous, syncopated melody from a piano on which some one was ragging the Mendelssohn wedding march. A white-haired man of sixty-odd and a boy of sixteen stood by a table in a corner of the porch with their backs to the dancers. They were bent before the amplifying-horn of a receiving set trying to catch through the din around them the broadcast reports of a championship tennis-match.

"Did you get that, Uncle Howard?" cried the boy excitedly. "Gee! Tilden's punk to-day!" He turned and shouted at a couple doing the Charleston just behind them. "Marie-Louise! Pop! Go on over to the other end of the porch! We can't hear a thing!"

"Loosen up, Gordie! Let yourself go. Atta boy! Look at my husband and your wife. Hey! Cut it out, you two!"

"Look, Aunt Jane ! Look at Evelyn!"

In the center of the porch before the open doorway a child of six was stepping, twisting, swaying in rhythm with the music. She held up her skirts in her tiny hands. She stamped

her feet in perfect time. The dancing couples left a free space for her, shouted applause, urged her on. On the top step of the porch, leaning against a pillar, watching the scene before her sat a woman of indeterminate age whose bobbed and silvery hair lent sharp accent to a flushed and smiling face. As she fanned herself with a handkerchief her head moved in synchronism with the child's. Beside her sat a nursegirl holding a year-old child in her lap.

The music suddenly stopped. At once a storm of laughter, shouting, clapping, the stamping of feet.

"Go on, Betty!"

"Do it again!"

"Give us 'Valencia'!"

"A—ah! It's got no pep!"

"Same thing!"

" 'Hello, Bluebird.' "

A boy of twelve came running to the seated woman, seized her hand, pulled her impetuously.

"Come on, Lilyn! You haven't danced with me yet!" "It's too hot, Stuart!" laughed "Lilyn." "Go bring me a glass of water."

Evelyn looked out over her pretty grounds toward the entrance-gate from the Boston Post Road. Any moment, now, Allen would be turning into that gate bringing Edna with him from the city to share in the family-celebration. Three years since that spring morning when she had sat on this same step and looked down toward that same gate and reflected that she was seeing Paul go out of it for the last time.

Yesterday she had received a birthday-letter from him containing a bit of news the thought of which deepened the smile on her face. She would answer his letter that evening after her birthday-party had broken up and her children and grandchildren were in bed. She would write not of hours of bitterness which had long since disappeared, but of memories of the years they had spent together which had brought and taught her much. That whole final episode seemed, now, in one sense, so pitiably trivial! And yet—trivial or not, pitiable or not, her blunder had been, in fact, a fortunate

thing for them both—a crazy jumble! She looked down at Allen's year-old son beside her. She was sorry Paul's baby was not a boy. His problem would have been so much simpler. She had her doubts about Lottie Ackerman's—Ondricek's—ability in that direction—Jazz! She must not forget to send Paul her proxy for the annual directors' meeting.

She looked back at the whirling, noisy group which, for the most part, owed its existence to her, at her children in fact and in law, and her grandchildren who found in her an energy, a will, an endurance beyond their own, a companion to whom each could turn with problems, confident of sympathy—and sanity. Something, at least, she had accomplished. How much? She saw Jane laughing up into the face of Marie-Louise's young husband. That foolish bit of trimming in her bed!

It was in the fall, months after Paul had gone out of her life, that she had discovered the extent of her blunder. She had been preparing to entertain some friends in her home and had found two of her pet Bohemian glass liqueur-bottles missing—also several glasses from the set. She had sharply questioned Ivy whose embarrassment had been immediately apparent. Then Ivy explained how it happened.

Jane had stayed over night in the house with three friends, following the Yale-Harvard football game, just before the house had been closed for the winter. No. Mr. Bradley was not in the party. The two men were strangers to Ivy. Mrs. Bradley had telephoned and told her that Mr. Ondricek had invited her to spend the night there. No. Mr. Ondricek was in Detroit. When he had returned Ivy had told him about this party, also about the broken glass—and everything. And Mr. Ondricek had said it was perfectly all right and not to say any more about it. And Ivy would surely have told Mrs. Ondricek about it right away only Mr. Ondricek had said like that: to forget it. So that's what she had done because it happened so long ago and she had had so much tribulation all winter with that dog-goned black loafer who sat around the house all day and expected her to feed him.

Weeks later Evelyn had at length had that talk with Jane

which had begun with a confession and ended in an intimacy rare indeed between mother and daughter. What Evelyn learned that night profoundly affected her, showed her a reason for living, a definite task before her, a definite place for her to fill. What Jane learned that night amazed her, had given her new courage, new will.

Evelyn had afterwards talked with Gordon Bradley. Again what she had learned from him had astonished her. He, too, was muddling along, helplessly. In fact, her talks with people in general in these last three years were constantly surprising her, were revealing to her more and more how universal is human inertia, how widespread her own former willingness to grope through life in misunderstanding more or less complete. She had thought her problems so personal, so intricate! She found the same old problems bobbing up in the lives of all with whom she talked; the same old ignorance that she had thought confined to herself; the same old unwillingness to see. Was it taking everybody a lifetime to learn how to live?

When men and women with whom she talked told her of the very unusual intimacy of their talk with her she smiled, seeing more and more clearly that she who knew so little had something to give of which all had need, something which life had somehow taught her when she herself had least suspected she was learning.

Something she had learned!—if only the uncommonness of common-sense!

Same old problems, same old mistakes crowding in on her incessantly from the lives of all with whom she came in contact, from what she read and saw and heard about her. Day after day found her more ready for simple tasks, for friendship, more full of the joy of living. Something she had learned—if only the fact of how little she knew, of how content she had been through life to look only for her own reflection in the surface of the universe beyond herself.

That foolish bit of trimming in her bed had been the cause of much for which every one concerned had cause to thank God and circumstance.

She had written Paul something of all this in the letter she had sent him when he had married Lottie Ackerman two years after their final talk, after various legal obstacles had been cleared away. Another experiment! Theories—memories— No one could rob her of those memories!—priceless memories—what had Lottie Ackerman learned from Paul—or he from her?

Jazz!

Her smile grew merrier. She was watching Gordon Charleston with Marie-Louise to Betty's version of "Hello, Bluebird." Unconsciously she swayed her head from side to side. What nonsense! Stuart came running with the glass of water she had asked for. Six-year-old Evelyn plumped into her grandmother's lap, embraced her stormily:

"Oh, I wish I could always live with you!" She was looking through a white-curtained window to a street shaded with great elms. In the corner-pane of the lower sash an imperfection in the glass broke the rays of a setting sun into an oval, iridescent spot. Aus der Jugendzeit—her arms about Grandma Sheldon—yet swallows sing as sweetly now as then —Hello, Bluebird!— "Is it awful old, Lilyn, to be sixty?" Youth. Part and parcel of eternal youth. Always a romancer!—cost what it might.—Branches of pine pinned beneath masses of snow—and Helen of Troy—with bobbed gray hair! —for only what is lovely lives on and on for ever—and the rhythm of jazz—

"Mother—Look! There come Allen and Aunt Edna!"

Evelyn hurried down the steps as Allen's car stopped before them. Edna stepped from the car, embraced her merrily. The others crowded up behind her.

"Hello, birthday-girl!"

Then Allen came, threw his arms about his mother, kissed her on both cheeks, cried:

"How does it feel to be sixty?"

And Evelyn laughed up into her boy's face, drew a long breath, exclaimed:

"Wonderful!"

THE END